

THE MEDIEVAL MEDITERRANEAN \* BRILL

# The Reign of Leo VI (886-912) *Politics & People*

by  
Shaun Tougher



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**THE REIGN OF LEO VI**  
(886–912)

# THE MIEVIAL MIEITERRANEAN

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# THE REIGN OF LEO VI (886-912)

*Politics and People*

BY

SHAUN TOUGHER



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## ABBREVIATIONS

AASS	Acta Sanctorum
AB	Analecta Bollandiana
ABSA	Annual of the British School at Athens
AJA	American Journal of Archaeology
Annales ESC	Annales. Économies, Sociétés, Civilisations
BBTT	Belfast Byzantine Texts and Translations
BMGS	Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies
BNJ	Byzantinisch-neugriechische Jahrbücher
BSI	Byzantinoslavica
Byz	Byzantion
BZ	Byzantinische Zeitschrift
CFHB	Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae
CSHB	Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae
DOP	Dumbarton Oaks Papers
DOS	Dumbarton Oaks Studies
DOT	Dumbarton Oaks Texts
EHR	English Historical Review
EO	Échos d'Orient
GRBS	Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies
Hell	Ἑλληνικά
JÖB	Jahrbuch der österreichischen Byzantinistik
JWarb	Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes
OC	Orientalia Christiana
PG	Patrologia Graeca
PO	Patrologia Orientalis
PRIA	Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy
REB	Revue des Études Byzantines
RESEE	Revue des Études Sud-Est Européennes
ROC	Revue de l'Orient Chrétien
SBN	Studi Bizantini e Neoellenici
Script	Scriptorium
SK	Seminarium Kondakovianum
TM	Travaux et Mémoires
TTH	Translated Texts for Historians
ZRVI	Zbornik Ràdova Vizantološkog Instituta

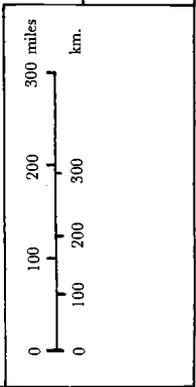
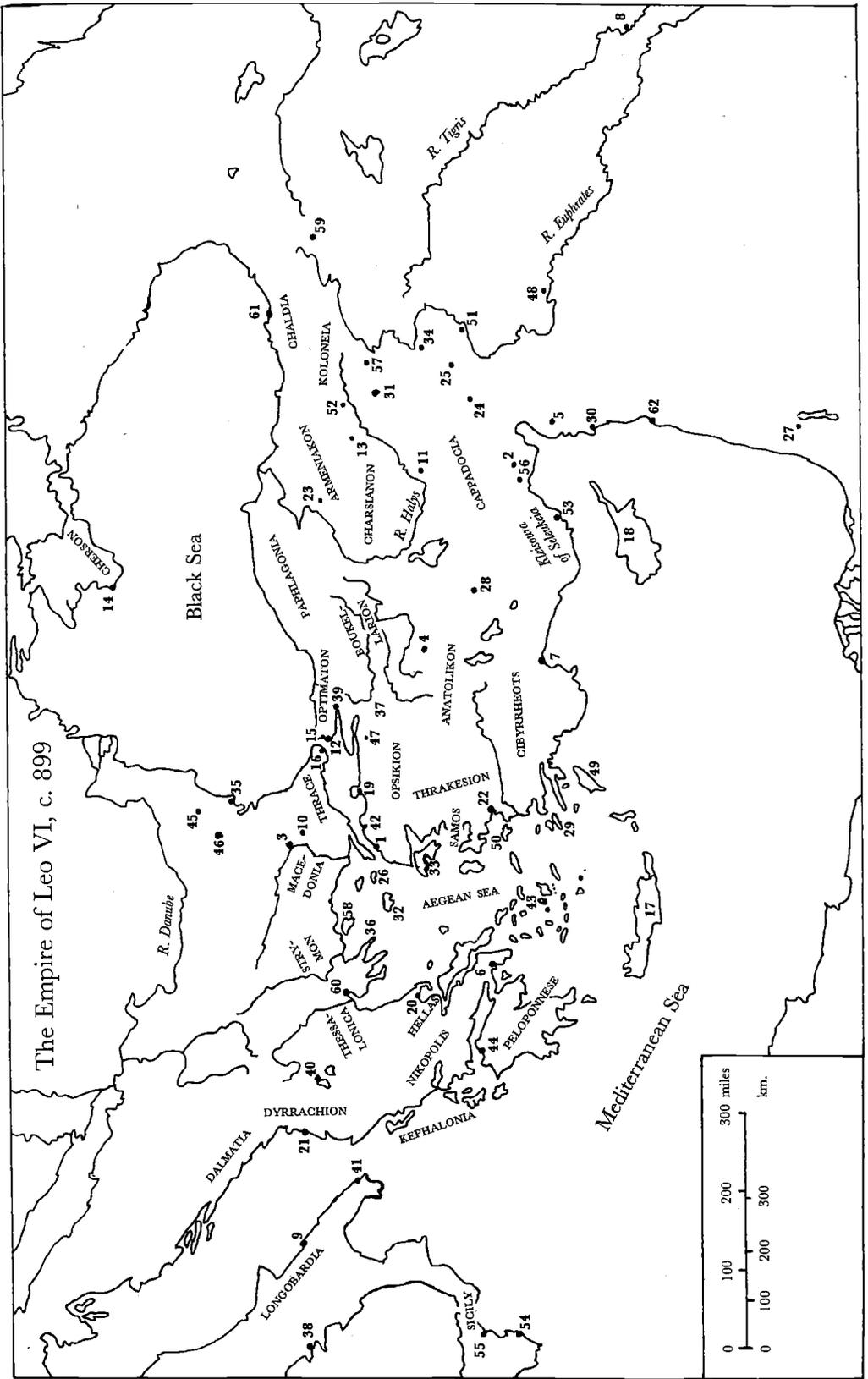


MAP

KEY FOR THE MAP ON PAGE XIII

- |                    |                              |                       |
|--------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Abydos          | 22. Ephesus                  | 43. Paros             |
| 2. Adana           | 23. Euchaita                 | 44. Patras            |
| 3. Adrianople      | 24. Germanikeia (Maras)      | 45. Pliska            |
| 4. Amorion         | 25. Hadath (al-Hadath/Adata) | 46. Preslav           |
| 5. Antioch         | 26. Imbros                   | 47. Pythia            |
| 6. Athens          | 27. Jerusalem                | 48. Raqqa (al-Raqqah) |
| 7. Attaleia        | 28. Kabala                   | 49. Rhodes            |
| 8. Bagdad          | 29. Kos                      | 50. Samos             |
| 9. Bari            | 30. Laodicea                 | 51. Samosata          |
| 10. Bulgarophygon  | 31. Larissa                  | 52. Sebasteia         |
| 11. Caesarea       | 32. Lemnos                   | 53. Seleukeia         |
| 12. Chalcedon      | 33. Lesbos                   | 54. Syracuse          |
| 13. Charsianon     | 34. Melitene                 | 55. Taormina          |
| 14. Cherson        | 35. Mesembria                | 56. Tarsus            |
| 15. Chrysopolis    | 36. Mount Athos              | 57. Tephrike          |
| 16. Constantinople | 37. Mount Olympos            | 58. Thasos            |
| 17. Crete          | 38. Naples                   | 59. Theodosiopolis    |
| 18. Cyprus         | 39. Nikomedeia               | 60. Thessalonike      |
| 19. Cyzicus        | 40. Ohrid                    | 61. Trebizond         |
| 20. Demetrias      | 41. Otranto                  | 62. Tripoli           |
| 21. Dyrrachion     | 42. Parion                   |                       |

The Empire of Leo VI, c. 899





## INTRODUCTION

### AIMS AND SOURCES

In the gallery of emperors who reigned over the Byzantine empire during its long life of more than a thousand years the figure of Leo VI (886-912) is not an unfamiliar one to those conversant with Byzantium's history. He was the heir of Basil I (867-886) the founder of the Macedonian dynasty, one of the empire's longest-surviving dynasties. His parentage is infamously uncertain; it is undeniable that his mother was Eudokia Ingerine, but whether his father was her lover Michael III (842-867) or her husband Basil the Macedonian is still a matter of debate.<sup>1</sup> It is equally notorious that Leo married four times in succession, creating ecclesiastical conflict that outlasted the temporal boundary of his reign.<sup>2</sup> This emperor is also an inescapable figure in the study of the legal, literary and military history of Byzantium due to his achievements in these spheres.<sup>3</sup> Yet beyond these points

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<sup>1</sup> See for instance E. Kislinger, 'Eudokia Ingerina, Basileios I. und Michael III', *JÖB*, 33 (1983), 119-136; C. Mango, 'Eudocia Ingerina, the Normans and the Macedonian Dynasty', *ZRV*, 14-15 (1973), 17-27, repr. *Byzantium and Its Image* (London, 1984), XV; C. I. Toul, 'Περὶ τῆς νοθογενείας τοῦ Λέοντος τοῦ Σοφοῦ', *Parnassos*, 21 (1979), 15-35; P. Magdalino, 'Basil I, Leo VI, and the Feast of the Prophet Elijah', *JÖB*, 38 (1988), 193-196; N. Adontz, 'La portée historique de l'oraison funèbre de Basile I par son fils Leon VI le sage', *Byz*, 8 (1933), 501-513.

<sup>2</sup> The tetragamy crisis tends to dominate accounts of Leo's reign. R. J. H. Jenkins, *Byzantium: The Imperial Centuries AD 610-1071* (London, 1966), devoted a separate chapter of his history to the problem, whilst C. Diehl, *Byzantine Portraits*, tr. H. Bell (New York, 1927), included a chapter entitled 'The Four Marriages of Leo the Wise'.

<sup>3</sup> There is of course overlap between these spheres. Leo is one of the major figures in the history of Byzantine law due to the fact that he succeeded in fulfilling his father's project of editing and compiling the Justinianic corpus in Greek, the *Basilika*, as well as producing his own collection of *Novels*: see A. Schminck, "Frömmigkeit ziere das Werk". Zur Datierung der 60 Bücher Leons VI', *Subseciva Groningana*, 3 (1989), 79-114, and *Studien zu mittelbyzantinischen Rechtsbüchern* (Frankfurt, 1986); M. T. Fögen, 'Legislation und Kodifikation des Kaisers Leons VI', *Subseciva Groningana*, 3 (1989), 23-35, and 'Gesetz und Gesetzgebung in Byzanz. Versuch einer Funktionsanalyse', *Ius Commune*, 14 (1987), 137-158, esp. 148-152; N. Van der Wal and J. H. A. Lokin, *Historiae iuris graeco-romani delineatio. Les sources du droit byzantin de 300 à 1453* (Groningen, 1985), esp. 78-89; and see also *Law and Society in Byzantium, Ninth-Twelfth Centuries*, ed. A. E. Laiou and D. Simon (Washington DC, 1994). Unlike his father Basil Leo received a literary education from his youth, and during his life he wrote and delivered orations, homilies, hymns and poems, some of which have survived: see T. Antonopoulou, *The Homilies of the Emperor Leo VI* (forthcoming); J. Grosdidier de Matons, 'Trois études sur Léon VI', *TM*, 5 (1973), 181-242, esp. 181-207;

Leo and his reign are generally under-appreciated. Much is assumed rather than explored. It is a common perception that the emperor was feeble in the arena of foreign affairs, and in particular that the Bulgarians and the Arabs were able to run rings round him because he had no foreign policy.<sup>4</sup> As for internal affairs it is presumed that he was under the thumb of unethical favourites.<sup>5</sup> Leo has even suffered the ignominy of being dismissed as rather 'colourless'.<sup>6</sup> Such observations are superficial and inadequate, and indeed save for a few specific areas the reign of Leo VI has not been subjected to the same degree of attention as has been devoted to his father and son, Basil I and Constantine VII.<sup>7</sup> It is these two figures that tend to come to mind when the history of the early Macedonian dynasty is considered, the first as its energetic establisher, the second as its great literature-producing myth-maker.<sup>8</sup> It is a striking fact that of the emperors who reigned from 867-959 only Leo VI has not been the focus of a study of his life and times in this century.<sup>9</sup> This lack of a comprehen-

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P. Lemerle, *Byzantine Humanism*, tr. H. Lindsay and A. Moffatt (Canberra, 1986), esp. 238-239; A. Vogt and I. Hausherr, 'Oraison funèbre de Basile I par son fils Léon VI le sage', *OC*, 26 (1932), 5-79; E. Patlagean, 'La civilisation en la personne du souverain Byzance, Xe siècle', *Le temps et la réflexion*, 4 (1983), 181-194, esp. 189-190. Antonopoulou's promised edition of the homilies is eagerly awaited. Leo also produced handbooks which have the strong didactic flavour that is so typical of the literary productions of the so-called Macedonian renaissance, the most famous being his military manual the *Taktika*, a work that is indispensable to historians of Byzantine military history and that initiated a revival of the genre in the tenth century: see Grosdidier de Matons, 'Trois études', esp. 206-242; A. Dain and J.-A. Foucault, 'Les stratégestes byzantins', *TM*, 2 (1967), 317-392, esp. 353-363; P. Magdalino, 'The Non-Judicial Legislation of Leo VI' (forthcoming); Patlagean, 'Civilisation', 190-191.

<sup>4</sup> See for instance R. Browning, *Byzantium and Bulgaria. A Comparative Study Across the Early Medieval Frontier* (London, 1975), 57.

<sup>5</sup> Browning, *Byzantium and Bulgaria*, 57; S. Runciman, *The Emperor Romanus Lecapenus and his Reign. A Study of Tenth-Century Byzantium* (Cambridge, 1929), 16; Diehl, *Portraits*, 173.

<sup>6</sup> C. Mango, 'The Legend of Leo the Wise', *ΣΧΕΜΑ*, 6 (1960), 59-93, esp. 59, repr. *Image*, XVI.

<sup>7</sup> For the reign of Basil I there is A. Vogt, *Basil Ier empereur de Byzance (867-886) et la civilisation byzantine à la fin du IXe siècle* (Paris, 1908), whilst the reign of Constantine VII is the focus of study for A. Toynbee, *Constantine Porphyrogenitus and his World* (London, 1973), as well as for the collection of papers in *Κωνσταντίνος Ζ' Πορφυρογέννητος και η εποχή του*, ed. A. Markopoulos (Athens, 1989).

<sup>8</sup> However see I. Ševčenko, 'Re-reading Constantine Porphyrogenitus', *Byzantine Diplomacy*, edd. J. Shepard and S. Franklin (Aldershot, 1992), 167-195, who presents Constantine VII's literary achievements in a more realistic light. The fact that he has to do so only underlines the popular perceptions of Constantine VII that have existed.

<sup>9</sup> For Basil I and Constantine VII see n. 7 above. The thirteen-month rule of Alexander I (912-913) is documented by P. Karlin-Hayter, 'The Emperor Alexan-

sive study only serves to perpetuate the misconceptions that still persist concerning Leo and his reign, and it is this void in the documenting of the early history of the Macedonian dynasty that this book aims to begin to fill.

Whilst there is a lack of a major tome on this emperor significant piece-meal work has been produced on Leo VI and his reign. This century several scholars have studied aspects of the emperor and his times. Vogt, who wrote a study on the reign of Basil I, did not indulge Leo to this extent, but did contribute an examination of his early life from his birth to his accession.<sup>10</sup> Further, together with Hausherr he produced an eagerly awaited study, edition and translation of Leo's *Epitaphios* on his parents.<sup>11</sup> Throughout the early decades of this century Grégoire published many vital studies on the literature that touched on Leo's reign.<sup>12</sup> In the thirties Grumel made crucial headway in settling several of the dubious points of chronology regarding the reign.<sup>13</sup> Naval history formed the distinctive background of Dolley's numerous, but flawed, articles on the period.<sup>14</sup> Vasiliev's contribution to the understanding of the reign lies in the field of foreign affairs, especially Byzantium's relations with the Arabs and

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der's Bad Name', *Speculum*, 44 (1969), 585-596, repr. *Studies in Byzantine Political History* (London, 1981), XV. The life and reign of the usurper of Constantine VII's imperial power Romanos Lekapenos (920-944) has been scrutinised by Runciman, *Romanus Lecapenus*. This is not to suggest however that these reigns require no further attention. As well as Leo VI being neglected this century (a nineteenth-century study in Russian was published: N. Popov, *The Emperor Leo the Wise and his Reign, Considered from an Ecclesiastic Point of View* (Moscow, 1892)), it is curious that no book on Michael III has appeared.

<sup>10</sup> A. Vogt, 'La jeunesse de Léon VI le sage', *Revue Historique*, 174 (1934), 389-428.

<sup>11</sup> Vogt and Hausherr, 'Oraison'.

<sup>12</sup> See for instance H. Grégoire, 'Saint Démétrianos, évêque de Chytri (île de Chypre)', *BZ*, 16 (1907), 204-240; 'Les Acta Sanctorum', *Byz*, 4 (1927-1928), 791-812; 'La vie de saint Blaise d'Amorium', *Byz*, 5 (1929-1930), 391-414; 'L'oraison funèbre de Basile I', *Byz*, 7 (1932), 626-633; 'Le communiqué arabe sur la prise de Thessalonique (904)', *Byz*, 22 (1952), 373-378; 'La carrière du premier Nicéphore Phocas', *Hell*, 4 (1953), 232-254.

<sup>13</sup> V. Grumel, 'Chronologie des événements du règne de Léon VI (886-912)', *EO*, 35 (1936), 5-42; 'Notes de chronologie byzantine', *EO*, 35 (1936), 331-335; 'Notes chronologiques. La révolte d'Andronic Doux sous Léon VI. La victoire navale d'Himérius', *EO*, 36 (1937), 202-207.

<sup>14</sup> R. H. Dolley, 'A Forgotten Byzantine Conquest of Kypros', *Bulletin de l'Académie Royale de Belgique. Classe des Lettres et des Sciences Morales et Politiques*, fifth series, 34 (1948), 209-224; 'The Historical Significance of the Translation of St Lazaros from Kypros to Byzantium', *Byz*, 19 (1949), 59-71; 'The Date of the St Mokios Attempt on the Life of the Emperor Leon VI', *Mélanges Henri Grégoire, Annuaire de l'Institut de Philologie et d'Histoire Orientales et Slaves*, 10 (1950), 231-238; 'The Lord High Admiral Eustathios Argyros and the Betrayal of Taormina to the African Arabs in 902', *SBN*, 7 (1953), 340-353.

the Russians.<sup>15</sup> In the seventies there appeared a fascinating study on Leo the writer by Grosdidier de Matons, which focused in particular on three of his works.<sup>16</sup> In more recent years Leo's legal work and ideology have been addressed by Schminck<sup>17</sup>, and Magdalino has contributed several significant studies on diverse aspects of the reign such as literature, art, ceremonial and politics, which have shed much light on the character of Leo and his reign.<sup>18</sup> Above all these scholars however there tower two figures who have made major contributions to the study of Leo VI and his reign: Romilly Jenkins and Patricia Karlin-Hayter. A glance at the contents of their collections of articles in the *Variorum Reprints* series reveals the extent of their importance in the study of Byzantine history of the ninth and tenth centuries.<sup>19</sup> These two scholars must be read by anyone studying the early Macedonian dynasty, and it is through them that Leo VI emerges as rather different to the popular perception of the emperor. For Jenkins Leo was a 'great' emperor, whose greatness however 'does not lie on the surface', not in spectacular military victories but in less visible 'counter measures' that 'were both permanent and salutary'.<sup>20</sup> Further Jenkins perceived Leo as a man of great 'tenacity of will'.<sup>21</sup> Karlin-Hayter shared this more positive view of Leo and his reign, which she particularly emphasised in an article addressing Leo's handling of foreign affairs. She demonstrated that it was mistaken to dismiss Leo 'as a supine and feeble sovereign who left government to a series of deplorable favorites, devoting himself exclusively to wife-trouble and impractical theorizing', and she asserted that 'there is abundant evidence that Leo was very much an acting ruler'.<sup>22</sup> There

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<sup>15</sup> A. A. Vasiliev, 'The Second Russian Attack on Constantinople', *DOP*, 6 (1951), 161-225; *Byzance et les Arabes*, II, 1, *La dynastie macédonienne (867-969)*, tr. M. Canard (Brussels, 1968), II, 2, *La dynastie macédonienne (867-969). Extraits des sources arabes*, tr. M. Canard (Brussels, 1950).

<sup>16</sup> Grosdidier de Matons, 'Trois études'.

<sup>17</sup> See n. 3 above and also A. Schminck, "'Rota tu volubilis". Kaisermacht und Patriarchenmacht in Mosaiken", *Cupido Legum*, edd. L. Burgmann, M. T. Fögen, A. Schminck (Frankfurt, 1985), 211-234.

<sup>18</sup> P. Magdalino, 'The Bath of Leo the Wise', *Maistor. Classical, Byzantine and Renaissance Studies for Robert Browning*, ed. A. Moffatt (Canberra, 1984), 225-240; 'Elijah'; 'The Bath of Leo the Wise and the "Macedonian Renaissance" Revisited: Topography, Iconography, Ceremonial, Ideology', *DOP*, 42 (1988), 97-118; 'Saint Demetrios and Leo VI', *BSL*, 51 (1990), 198-201; 'Non-Juridical'.

<sup>19</sup> R. J. H. Jenkins, *Studies on Byzantine History of the 9th and 10th Centuries* (London, 1970); Karlin-Hayter, *Studies in*.

<sup>20</sup> Jenkins, *Imperial Centuries*, 201, 210.

<sup>21</sup> Jenkins, *Imperial Centuries*, 215.

<sup>22</sup> P. Karlin-Hayter, 'When Military Affairs Were in Leo's Hands'. A note on Byzantine Foreign Policy (886-912)', *Traditio*, 23 (1967), 15-40, repr. *Studies in*, XIII.

is no doubt that Jenkins and Karlin-Hayter constitute the Byzantinists who are most familiar with Leo's reign and most appreciative of its character and that of the emperor, but neither has produced a tome setting their views in an extended narrative of the reign. Jenkins did not survive to write his intended study of the reign of Leo VI<sup>23</sup>, whilst Karlin-Hayter's important assessments of the figures and facets of the reign are scattered in the commentary of her invaluable edition of the *Life of Euthymios*.<sup>24</sup> It is this missing extended analysis of the reign that this book aims to address.

However this book will not simply be the work the Jenkins never wrote and that Karlin-Hayter has not yet written. A comprehensive treatment of the reign is not envisaged, but a more selective investigation focusing in particular on the political history of the reign and those people who were key players in it. Further Jenkins's and Karlin-Hayter's opinions will not be automatically followed. In part this is because views of Byzantine history and society alter, but also because the arguments of these scholars do not always convince. For instance regarding the former case in recent years a more sophisticated understanding of the nature of political groupings within Byzantium and of the biases which could motivate them has developed<sup>25</sup>; thus it is no longer sufficient or accurate to talk of 'military aristocrats' who were opposed to the rule of Leo VI.<sup>26</sup> An example of the latter case is Jenkins's attempt to explain the flight of the eunuch Samonas, a palace official close to Leo VI, back to his native Arab empire as a stage-managed drama that would enable this ally of the emperor to discover what members of the 'military aristocracy' were plotting with the Arabs.<sup>27</sup> This theory has not met with widespread acceptance, but as yet no other interpretation of the events has been offered.<sup>28</sup> As for Karlin-Hayter, it is difficult for example to accept her

<sup>23</sup> See C. Mango, 'Introduction', *DOP*, 21 (1967).

<sup>24</sup> P. Karlin-Hayter, *Vita Euthymii Cp. Text, Translation, Introduction and Commentary* (Brussels, 1970).

<sup>25</sup> See for example J.-C. Cheynet, *Pouvoir et contestations à Byzance (963-1210)* (Paris, 1990), who highlights the regional bias of Byzantine families and the allegiances that existed between various groupings; V. N. Vlyssidou, *Ἐξωτερικὴ πολιτικὴ καὶ ἐσωτερικὲς ἀντιδράσεις τὴν ἐποχὴ τοῦ Βασιλείου Α'* (Athens, 1991), who argues that the western policy of Basil I was seriously undermined by the negative attitude towards it of some of those officials chosen to implement it; M. Whittow, *The Making of Orthodox Byzantium, 600-1025* (Basingstoke and London, 1996), which contains extensive comment on the phenomenon of the 'eastern military families' of the ninth and tenth centuries.

<sup>26</sup> R. J. H. Jenkins, 'The Flight of Samonas', *Speculum*, 23 (1948), 217-235, repr. *Studies on*, X.

<sup>27</sup> Jenkins, 'Flight'.

insistence on the reliability of the evidence of the *Life of Euthymios* concerning both Stylianos Zaoutzes (a key figure in the early years of Leo's reign) and Nikolaos (the sometime patriarch of Constantinople).<sup>29</sup> It is perfectly evident that the author of the *Life* has a natural bias against Stylianos and Nikolaos, for they were both opponents and enemies of the saintly Euthymios. Evidence from other sources that tells a different story to that of the *Life* is too easily discounted by Karlin-Hayter. As for the aspects of the political history chosen to be focused on these were selected by the necessity to cover elements of the reign that have not received sufficient attention, such as the fall of the patriarch Photios on Leo's accession, the emperor's particular attachment to eunuchs, the relationship between the emperor and the senatorial order, Leo's own reputation for wisdom, and the role of Alexander during his brother's reign. The objective then was to fill gaps or flaws in the existing literature so as to provide a fuller and more rounded picture of Leo and the political history of his reign.

The structure of the book has been arranged so as to give a rough chronological progression from Leo's birth in 866 to his death in 912. Chapter One serves as an introductory guide to both the reigns of Basil I and Leo VI, to provide a context for the closer studies of the subsequent chapters. Chapter Two addresses the problem of the relationship between Basil and Leo, and concentrates on what is known of their attitudes to one another rather than trying to prove if Leo was illegitimate or not. Chapter Three is concerned with Photios's end at the hands of his ex-pupil, who deposed, exiled and tried him during the first year of the reign. Chapter Four is devoted to the figure of Stylianos Zaoutzes who was the emperor's right-hand man for most of the first half of the reign, and tries to gauge how accurate it is to consider Stylianos as the true ruling force for this period. Chapter Five investigates Leo's contemporary reputation as a wise man. Chapter Six deals with the familiar tetragamy crisis, but takes a different angle by tracing Leo's marital problems from their origin and by highlighting how the emperor sought to achieve his goals. The focus of Chapter Seven is military affairs. To avoid merely repeating Karlin-Hayter's essential survey a more limited scope was taken, investigating the emperor's attitude to the two major military problems of his day, Bulgaria under Symeon and Arab naval power. Chapter Eight was inspired by the commonly found image of the good relationship between the emperor and his senators, and is particularly concerned with Leo's relationship with his eunuchs and his *strategoï* of

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<sup>28</sup> See for instance, Karlin-Hayter, *VE, Commentary*, 177.

the Phokas, Doukas and Argyros families. Finally in Chapter Nine Leo's brother Alexander, who was co-emperor and eventual successor, takes centre stage. Politics and people are the central interest, as well as the desire to show that Leo VI, as Jenkins and Karlin-Hayter appreciated, should not be underestimated.

The fundamental problem at the root of negative perceptions of the reign of Leo VI is a source one, as Jenkins and Karlin-Hayter recognised.<sup>30</sup> For the study of the reign the two major sources are the chronicle of Symeon the Logothete and the *Life of Euthymios*, which each have a peculiar slant. The chronicle is marked by hostility to the Macedonian dynasty.<sup>31</sup> It seems that the Logothete, who compiled his chronicle in the mid-tenth century, was a partisan of Romanos Lekapenos, the usurper who interrupted the reign of Constantine VII; his chronicle, the most significant part of which is the period from 842 (where the chronicle of George the Monk breaks off) down to the year 948, is sympathetic to this figure at the expense of the Macedonians. Jenkins asserts that 'The Logothete's selection of incidents is undoubtedly dictated by dislike of the Macedonian emperors'<sup>32</sup>, and also argues that for the years 867-913 (covering the reigns of Basil I, Leo VI, and Alexander I) the Logothete relied for his chronology on a series of annals.<sup>33</sup> Although the Greek text of the Logothete chronicle has not been edited it is familiar from the edited variant versions of it, such as the chronicles of Leo Grammaticus and the Continuator of George the Monk.<sup>34</sup> Other more distinct variants are the chronicle of Pseudo-Symeon (which is more condensed, contains regnal years, has an extreme bias against Photios and extends to the year 962) and that of Theophanes Continuatus (which contains

<sup>29</sup> For example Karlin-Hayter, *VE*, Introduction, 58-60.

<sup>30</sup> Jenkins, *Imperial Centuries*, 198; Karlin-Hayter, 'Military Affairs', 15, and *Studies in*, iii.

<sup>31</sup> For the Logothete chronicle see Toynbee, *Constantine*, Annex I, 606-612; G. Ostrogorsky, *History of the Byzantine State*, tr. J. Hussey, second edition (Oxford, 1968), 147, 210; Runciman, *Romanus Lecapenus*, 1-2; J. B. Bury, *A History of the Eastern Roman Empire from the Fall of Irene to the Accession of Basil I (A. D. 802-867)* (London, 1912), Appendix III, 455-459; R. J. H. Jenkins, 'The Chronological Accuracy of the "Logothete" for the Years A.D. 867-913', *DOP*, 19 (1965), 91-112, repr. *Studies on*, III; A. Markopoulos, 'Sur les deux versions de la chronographie de Symeon Logothete', *BZ*, 76 (1983), 279-284; W. T. Treadgold, 'The Chronological Accuracy of the *Chronicle* of Symeon the Logothete for the Years 813-845', *DOP*, 33 (1979), 157-197.

<sup>32</sup> Jenkins, 'Chronological Accuracy', 96.

<sup>33</sup> Jenkins, 'Chronological Accuracy'.

<sup>34</sup> *Leo Grammaticus*, ed. I. Bekker, *CSHB* (Bonn, 1832); *Georgius Monachus Continuatus*, ed. I. Bekker, *CSHB* (Bonn, 1838). This latter version shall be used as the main reference for the chronicle.

pro-Macedonian versions of the reigns of Michael III and Basil I and continues down to the year 961, but basically copies the Logothete version of the reign of Leo VI, though it shows a marked favouritism towards the Phokades, Doukai and Argyroi).<sup>35</sup> It was the Logothete who first recorded the detail that Eudokia Ingerine was still the mistress of Michael III after her marriage to Basil the Macedonian, and that Basil's sons Constantine, Leo and Stephen were in fact the children of Michael. It is the Logothete's negative image of the reign of Leo VI (which is nearly two and a half times longer than his account of the reign of Basil I<sup>36</sup>) that still plagues modern accounts of it; Leo persecuted the innocent Photios, was led astray by Stylianos Zaoutzes and Samonas, and was largely powerless against the military threat of the Bulgarians and the Arabs. The Logothete was determined to say nothing good about this emperor, and unfortunately Leo never received the eulogistic treatment that Constantine VII ensured was lavished on Basil<sup>37</sup>, which would have injected some balance into the picture.

The other major source for the reign, the *Life of Euthymios*, does however convey a more positive image of the emperor. This biography of the monk Euthymios (c. 832-917)<sup>38</sup>, the spiritual father of Leo VI, was probably written between the years 920-925 by someone who had had an insider's perspective on court affairs during the reign; Karlin-Hayter asserts that the *Life* contains 'the personal reminiscences of an eye-witness', pointing to the vivid and life-like details contained within the biography, particularly involving the emperor himself.<sup>39</sup> One especially memorable episode related is the unexpected visit of the emperor to the monastery of Euthymios at Psamathia when the monks were at dinner, and Karlin-Hayter ob-

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<sup>35</sup> For Pseudo-Symeon see *Symeonis Magistri Annales*, ed. I. Bekker, *CSHB* (Bonn, 1838); A. Markopoulos, *Ἡ Χρονογραφία τοῦ Ψευδοσυμμεών καὶ οἱ πηγές της* (Ioannina, 1978); Toynbee, *Constantine*, 609-612. For Theophanes Continuatus see *Theophanes Continuatus*, ed. I. Bekker, *CSHB* (Bonn, 1838); Ostrogorsky, *State*, 210; R. J. H. Jenkins, 'The Classical Background of the Scriptorum Post Theophanem', *DOP*, 8 (1954), 13-30, repr. *Studies on*, IV, and 'Constantine VII's Portrait of Michael III', *Bulletin de l'Académie Royale de Belgique. Classe des Lettres et des Sciences Morales et Politiques*, fifth series, 34 (1948), 71-77, repr. *Studies on*, I; H. G. Nickles, 'The *Continuatio Theophani*', *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association*, 68 (1937), 221-227. See also A. Markopoulos, 'Le témoignage de Vaticanus Gr. 163 pour la période entre 945-963', *Symmeikta*, 3 (1979), 83-119.

<sup>36</sup> Jenkins, 'Chronological Accuracy', 96.

<sup>37</sup> This *Vita Basilii* forms Book Five of the chronicle of Theophanes Continuatus (*TC*, 211-353).

<sup>38</sup> See Karlin-Hayter, *VE, Introduction*, 31, n. 2.

<sup>39</sup> For date and authorship see Karlin-Hayter, *VE, Introduction*, 10, 34-37.

serves that 'The most lively and picturesque scenes in Psamathia leave Euthymios more remote than Leo'.<sup>40</sup> Certainly although Euthymios is the true hero of the *Life* the emperor also emerges as a sympathetic figure, human and tragic with all his flaws and crises on show. He is in turns arrogant, humble, proud, deflated, angry, distraught, mischievous and dignified. There is no doubting the value of this source for a better understanding of Leo and a knowledge of certain details of his reign. However the scope of the source is ultimately limited, for it is primarily concerned not with relating all manner of information about Leo's reign, but with explaining how Euthymios had come to replace Nikolaos as patriarch and how it was that he supported the granting of economy to the emperor in the matter of his fourth marriage; it was concerned with the explaining of 'a situation that was not easy to explain' in the aftermath of Nikolaos's triumph as 'the champion of morality' in 920.<sup>41</sup> The *Life* is further limited by other factors. There are lacunas within the text; it is missing both its beginning and its end and there are three gaps in the middle. Most crucially for the study of Leo VI it is missing an account of how Euthymios came into contact with the imperial family and became Leo's spiritual father, his role in the episode of Leo's imprisonment, and accounts of the death of Stylianos, the coronation of Constantine VII, the death of Leo VI, the accession of Alexander I and the restoration of Nikolaos to the patriarchal throne.<sup>42</sup> Further, although for many the truthfulness of this source is unassailable, the *Life* is surely untrustworthy when it comes to describing the deeds and characters of the two main opponents of Euthymios, Stylianos Zaoutzes and Nikolaos. Although Karlin-Hayter noted that de Boor thought the *Life* to be so fair 'as to be magnanimous', and she herself describes it as 'remarkably truthful', her own observation that it is 'essentially a skillful defence of Euthymios' should give greater pause for thought.<sup>43</sup> It is true that the *Life* has an early date and that its author is evidently familiar with events and episodes from the reign, but this is no guarantee of honesty. Karlin-Hayter's trust in the author led her to accept that Stylianos Zaoutzes was indeed an all-powerful force from the very start of Leo's reign, though she herself was not entirely convinced and notes that 'the *V. E.* certainly exaggerates Leo's non-participation' in the purge against Photios and his

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<sup>40</sup> Karlin-Hayter, *VE, Introduction*, 35.

<sup>41</sup> Karlin-Hayter, *VE, Introduction*, 9.

<sup>42</sup> Karlin-Hayter, *VE, Introduction*, 30-32.

<sup>43</sup> Karlin-Hayter, *VE, Introduction*, 9.

family in the opening stages of the reign, a purge the *Life* fully ascribes to Stylianos.<sup>44</sup> As for the case of Nikolaos Karlin-Hayter believes the *Life* when it asserts that the patriarch was in league with the rebel general Andronikos Doukas and that Doukas had already defected to the Arabs by Christmas 906 when Nikolaos was still patriarch, although both the Byzantine and Arab chronicles indicate that Doukas only defected after the fall of Nikolaos in February 907.<sup>45</sup> Indeed Karlin-Hayter is adamant that the chronology of the *Life* is always to be favoured over that of the Logothete chronicle, despite the fact that Jenkins demonstrated that the Logothete is chronologically accurate for the years 867-913.<sup>46</sup> Thus when it comes to the major sources for the reign of Leo VI one is faced by a combination of a hostile chronicle and a vivid but not unbiased saint's life, a fact which accounts for the poor image of Leo VI and his reign. Yet as both Karlin-Hayter and Jenkins knew this is not the whole picture. Jenkins observed that beyond the Logothete chronicle 'there is a cloud of other witness to the essential goodness of his [Leo VI's] character and to the soundness of his policies'<sup>47</sup>, whilst Karlin-Hayter noted that there is 'a variety of other sources' that 'refuses to fit [the] picture' that is delineated by the two major sources.<sup>48</sup> A consideration of this varied cloud constitutes the rest of this introduction.

Several of the authors of sources that date to or concern the reign of Leo VI were officials of the emperor, and many of them are well known for their own roles in Byzantine history. Some of the authors were emperors themselves, such as Leo's father Basil I. There have survived two parainetic texts, that is addresses of advice, written as if from the emperor Basil I to his son and heir Leo VI.<sup>49</sup> These texts owe much to previous examples of the genre such as Isocrates's *To Nicocles* and *To Demonicus*, but they are especially indebted to a sixth-century AD example, that of the parainesis of Agapitos, a deacon of Hagia Sophia, to the emperor Justinian I (527-565).<sup>50</sup> The two

<sup>44</sup> Karlin-Hayter, *VE, Introduction*, 58.

<sup>45</sup> Karlin-Hayter, *VE, Introduction*, 59-60.

<sup>46</sup> See P. Karlin-Hayter, 'La mort de Théophano (10. 11. 896 ou 895)', *BZ* 62 (1969), 13-18, esp. 18-19, repr. *Studies in*, XI; Jenkins, 'Chronological Accuracy'.

<sup>47</sup> Jenkins, *Imperial Centuries*, 198.

<sup>48</sup> Karlin-Hayter, *Studies in*, iii, and see also Karlin-Hayter, 'Military Affairs', 15.

<sup>49</sup> For these texts see *PG* 107, xxi-lx; A. Markopoulos, 'Autour des *Chapitres Parénétiqes* de Basile Ier' (forthcoming).

<sup>50</sup> For Agapitos, his text, its connection with those of Basil I, and parainesis in general see *PG* 86, 1163-1186; E. Barker, *Social and Political Thought in Byzantium* (Oxford, 1957), esp. 54-80; I. Ševčenko, 'Agapetus East and West: The Fate of a Byzantine "Mirror of Princes"', *RESEE*, 16 (1978), 3-44, repr. *Ideology, Letters and*

paraineseis for Leo were probably written in 879 and 886 respectively, after Leo's promotion to heir-apparent and then again on his restoration as heir-apparent after his release from imprisonment. Basil in fact is probably not the real author, and the patriarch Photios is the favourite candidate for the authorship of the *First Parainesis*. The texts themselves are not concerned with the concrete details of how to be a good emperor and how to govern well; they deal with the realms of ideology, though sometimes it may be suspected that a certain phrase or comment has particular relevance to political actualities. Despite this the texts are valuable for the study of Leo's life and reign for they are a good barometer for the political atmosphere, and also as ideology is a crucial factor to consider in the assessment of the reign of any emperor.

In his capacity as *atriklines* Philotheos compiled in September 899 the text known as the *Kletorologion*, which describes the order of precedence that was in use in the imperial palace in Constantinople at that time and the various feasts that occurred throughout the course of the Byzantine calendar, with the stated objective of creating an up-to-date handbook for the members of Philotheos's own profession.<sup>51</sup> This text is basic to an understanding of the middle Byzantine imperial administrative system, particularly as it existed at an exact moment in the reign of Leo VI.<sup>52</sup> The text does however cast light on other aspects of the reign. For example it testifies that the emperor was already renowned for his wisdom, and also gives some indications as to why this was so; it reports the changes that Leo made in certain ceremonies and the order of precedence; it reveals the high proportion of feasts celebrated throughout the year that had as their focus the glorification of the Macedonian dynasty, but also suggests that the memory of Michael III was a consideration; and it also casually indicates that the empress Zoe Zaoutzaina, Leo's second wife, was still alive in September 899. It is surely a text which has more interest than has been appreciated.

One of the most intriguing figures in the reign of Leo VI is Leo Choirosphaktes, a diplomat and relative of the emperor. His career

*Culture in the Byzantine World* (London, 1982), III; P. Henry III, 'A Mirror for Justinian: The *Ekthesis* of Agapetus Diaconus', *GRBS*, 8 (1967), 281-308; Patlagean, 'Civilisation', 187-188; I. Čičurov, 'Gesetz und Gerechtigkeit in den byzantinischen Fürstenspiegeln des 6.-9. Jahrhunderts', *Cupido*, 33-45.

<sup>51</sup> For Philotheos and his text see N. Oikonomidès, *Les listes de préséance byzantines des IXe et Xe siècles* (Paris, 1972), esp. 65-235.

<sup>52</sup> See J. B. Bury, *The Imperial Administrative System in the Ninth Century* (New York, 1958; orig. publ. London, 1911).

was already in progress under Basil I whom he served as *mystikos*, but it was under Leo that he came to particular prominence, as a successful ambassador to the courts of Bulgaria and Bagdad, as a suspected Hellene, and as a letter writer and poet.<sup>53</sup> Several of his letters from the course of his career have survived, together with letters of those men whom he had contact with, and these letters give greater depth to certain episodes of the reign. For instance there is the correspondence between Choirosphaktes and the Bulgarian leader Symeon from the negotiations in the aftermath of the Byzantine defeat in 896; the letters between Choirosphaktes and his friends whilst he was still in Bagdad in 906 on a mission to conclude a peace between the Byzantines and the Arabs, but also to bring back writs of economy from the eastern patriarchs for the fourth marriage of the emperor; and finally the pleas for liberty Choirosphaktes sent to Leo VI after his exile towards the end of the reign. These letters contain a wealth of valuable details, such as the recognition of the emperor's skill in astronomy, the outcome of the embassies that Choirosphaktes was involved in, and some of the factors that led to his own fall and exile. A certain amount of Choirosphaktes's poetry has also survived, and this too adds to the knowledge of Leo VI and his reign. For instance his poem for the occasion of the unveiling of the palace bath built by the emperor has, thanks to the studies of Magdalino<sup>54</sup>, revealed much of the further dimensions of the reign that would never be guessed from a reading of the chronicles. Choirosphaktes also wrote poems on the occasion of one of the emperor's weddings, the coronation of Constantine VII, and the deaths of Leo the Philosopher, Photios and the patriarch Stephen.<sup>55</sup>

Arethas is also a key figure from the reign, as well as being an extremely important commentator upon it.<sup>56</sup> Originally from Patras it appears that Arethas came into contact with Leo through Basil I. Throughout the reign, and beyond, he is found wearing many different hats, and his writings document them all. Before becoming archbishop of Caesarea he is found as the author of orations for certain court occasions in the years 901-902. These orations have great im-

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<sup>53</sup> See G. Kolias, *Léon Choerosphactès magistre, proconsul et patrice* (Athens, 1939); P. Magdalino, 'In Search of the Byzantine Courtier: Leo Choirosphaktes and Constantine Manasses' (forthcoming).

<sup>54</sup> Magdalino, 'Bath', 'Revisited', 'Courtier'.

<sup>55</sup> See T. Bergk, *Poetae Lyrici Graeci*, III (Leipzig, 1882), 356-358; P. Matrangola, *Anecdota Graeca*, II (Rome, 1850), 561-565; Kolias, *Choerosphactès*, Appendice.

<sup>56</sup> For Arethas's writings see *Arethae Archiepiscopi Caesariensis Scripta Minora*, ed. L. G. Westerink, I (Leipzig, 1968), II (Leipzig, 1972).

port, for they represent all the panegyrics on Leo VI that are possessed, and they also reflect key events such as the appointment of Nikolaos as patriarch in March 901, the translation of the relics of Lazaros to Constantinople by the emperor, and certain incidents in the field of foreign affairs.<sup>57</sup> However Arethas became an enemy of the emperor over the fourth marriage, and was in fact the leading figure of the opposition. From this period in his career several of his letters survive voicing his disapproval.<sup>58</sup> Yet after the opposition lost the battle when the emperor won his economy from the pope and the eastern patriarchs in 907 Arethas was reconciled, and in his writings of this phase he is found justifying his apparent change of side.<sup>59</sup> It was during this period of realignment with the imperial will that Arethas composed a vicious assault upon the exiled Leo Choirosphaktes who had been writing to the emperor and trying to persuade him to liberate him. This tract was called *Choirosphaktes* or *Wizard-Hater* (*Μισογόνης*), an allusion to the *Beard-Hater* of Choirosphaktes's pagan literary hero the emperor Julian (361-363), and was designed to prevent the emperor from giving in to the exiled Leo.<sup>60</sup> It is a fascinating document, both for its brutal animosity and for what it reveals of the reasons for Choirosphaktes's disgrace. His writings after the death of Leo VI are also of interest for the effects of the tetragamy crisis continued to be felt, especially as Nikolaos had returned to the patriarchal throne and set about ousting those who had

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<sup>57</sup> For the orations and their importance see R. J. H. Jenkins with B. Laourdas and C. A. Mango, 'Nine Orations of Arethas from Cod. Marc. Gr. 524', *BZ*, 47 (1954), 1-40, repr. *Studies on*, VI. See also *ASM*, II, 1-48.

<sup>58</sup> See R. J. H. Jenkins with B. Laourdas, 'Eight Letters of Arethas on the Fourth Marriage of Leo the Wise', *Hell*, 14 (1956), 293-372, repr. *Studies on*, VII; *ASM*, II, 49-112. Also of crucial importance for this period are the letters of Arethas's pupil and ally Niketas David: see *ASM*, II, 149-174; L. G. Westerink, 'Nicetas the Paphlagonian on the End of the World', *Essays in Memory of Basil Laourdas* (Thessalonike, 1975), 177-195, esp. 178-180, repr. *Texts and Studies in Neoplatonism and Byzantine Literature* (Amsterdam, 1980), 357-375, esp. 358-360.

<sup>59</sup> See P. Karlin-Hayter, 'Vita S. Euthymii', Appendix, *Byz*, 25-27 (1955-57), 747-778; 'New Arethas Texts for the Historical Study of the Vita Euthymii', *Byz*, 31 (1961), 273-307.

<sup>60</sup> See P. Karlin-Hayter, 'Arethas, Choirosphaktes and the Saracen Vizir', *Byz*, 35 (1965), 455-481, esp. 468-481, repr. *Studies in*, IX; *ASM*, I, 200-212; Magdalino, 'Courtier'. Constantine the Rhodian also wrote a work reviling Leo Choirosphaktes: see Matranga, *Anecdota*, II, 624-625; G. Downey, 'Constantine the Rhodian: His Life and Writings', *Late Classical and Medieval Studies in Honor of A. M. Friend* (Princeton, 1955), 212-221, esp. 213; Koliass, *Choerosphactès*, 68-69.

replaced him and his clergy. Again Arethas conducted a war of words.<sup>61</sup> During this period he also wrote another pro-economy document, but in another format; this is his funeral oration on Euthymios who died in 917.<sup>62</sup> This text fills in some of the blanks of the *Life of Euthymios*, such as the early career of Euthymios, as well as further detailing the crimes of Nikolaos and Alexander. In the study of the reign of Leo VI an appreciation and knowledge of Arethas's writings plays a vital part, as Jenkins acknowledged and as is clear from Dolley's erroneous conclusions based on his dating of the arrival of the relics of Lazaros in Byzantium, a dating that did not take into account the testimony of Arethas.<sup>63</sup>

Another figure who features prominently in the tetragamy crisis is Nikolaos, who was patriarch from 901-907 and again from 912-925, and he too has left behind a corpus of letters and documents.<sup>64</sup> He was a friend of Leo from his youth, being his fellow student and spiritual brother, and he had a lengthy career under the emperor, first as his *mystikos* and then as patriarch. It is unfortunate that the bulk of his writings, his letters, only date from his career after Leo's death, a fact that has prompted the suggestion that his earlier letters may have been destroyed in the course of the dispute over the fourth marriage.<sup>65</sup> However some of the surviving letters do refer back to events of Leo's reign. Of particular importance is one that was written soon after Nikolaos's return to the patriarchal throne in 912, for in it he sets forth to the pope his version of the tetragamy affair. In other letters Nikolaos alludes to military events and church affairs during the reign. Of Nikolaos's other writings that date from the reign one of particular interest is his homily on the fall of Thessa-

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<sup>61</sup> See P. Karlin-Hayter, 'New Arethas Documents III', *Byz*, 32 (1962), 117-127, 'New Arethas Documents IV', *Byz*, 32 (1962), 387-487, and 'New Arethas Documents V', *Byz*, 34 (1964), 49-67, Introduction repr. *Studies in*, VIII.

<sup>62</sup> See *ASM*, I, 82-93; M. Jugie, 'Homélie mariales byzantines', *PO*, 16 (1922), 427-589, esp. 486-489; Karlin-Hayter, 'Bad Name', 592-593.

<sup>63</sup> Jenkins, *Imperial Centuries*, 226; Dolley, 'Translation'.

<sup>64</sup> For Nikolaos and his writings see *Nicholas I Patriarch of Constantinople. Letters*, ed. tr. R. J. H. Jenkins and L. G. Westerink, *DOT* 2, *CFHB* 6 (Washington DC, 1973), and *Nicholas I Patriarch of Constantinople. Miscellaneous Writings*, ed. tr. L. G. Westerink, *DOT* 6, *CFHB* 20 (Washington DC, 1981). Note that the list of metropolitans and archbishops attributed to Nikolaos and located in Leo's reign has been re-dated to the twelfth century: see J. Darrouzès, *Notitiae Episcopatum Ecclesiae Constantinopolitanae* (Paris, 1981), esp. 172-174.

<sup>65</sup> *Nicholas. Letters*, xxx. It is a curious fact that none of Photios's letters date to the reign of Leo VI either, and virtually none of the correspondence of the emperor himself has survived. Perhaps the fire that broke out in the patriarchal archives at Hagia Sophia in 912 accounts for some of these gaps: *GMC*, 870-871.

lonike which he appears to have delivered shortly after the event.<sup>66</sup> Although the evident gap in Nikolaos's corpus of letters is to be regretted those writings that he has left behind that touch on the reign are of value.

Leo VI himself was also a prolific writer, and exercised his pen in a broad range of fields; he wrote guides on military matters, compiled and produced collections of laws, wrote homilies, orations, hymns and poems, and also composed a guide on the spiritual life for monks.<sup>67</sup> All these works are of relevance in an appreciation of Leo and his reign but some stand out as being of key importance. Those of his homilies which have been recognised as of particular historical interest are his funeral oration on his parents, his speech on the installation of his brother Stephen as patriarch, and his homily on the feast of Elijah; the funeral oration delivered in 888 reveals Leo's public attitude to his Macedonian origins, the speech on Stephen's installation indicates that not everyone was happy with this appointment, and the Elijah homily revolves around the emperor's fall in 883 and subsequent restoration in 886 and expresses Leo's guilt. Of the legal work the collection of *Novels* (new laws) is most significant for it conveys the emperor's attitude to various issues, highlights points of ideology, and attests to the important position of Stylianos Zaoutzes since most of the *Novels* are addressed to him. Of great importance is the *Taktika*, Leo's handbook on war for his generals. Although based on previous manuals, especially the sixth-century *Strategikon*, it has much to offer to an appreciation of the emperor and his reign; it contains some references to episodes from the reign, reveals Leo's attitudes on several matters but most obviously that of war and the military situation of his day, and above all indicates that this was an emperor who was concerned with foreign affairs.

Although Constantine VII never produced or commissioned an account of his father's reign there are surviving works of this emperor

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<sup>66</sup> Another source of direct relevance to the fall of Thessalonike in 904 is the work of John Kaminiates: see *Ioannis Caminiatae De Expugnatione Thessalonicae*, ed. G. Böhlig, *CFHB* 4 (Berlin, 1973). This source was much used in Karlin-Hayter, 'Military Affairs', but it is problematic. Although written from the perspective of a figure who was present in the city when it fell and then taken prisoner by the Arabs there is reason to believe that it was not actually written until the fifteenth century, though it may have been adapted from a contemporary account: see A. P. Kazhdan, 'Some Questions Addressed to the Scholars who Believe in the Authenticity of Kaminiates' "Capture of Thessalonica", *BZ*, 71 (1978), 301-314, repr. *Authors and Texts in Byzantium* (Aldershot, 1993), XII; V. Christides, 'Once Again Caminiates' "Capture of Thessaloniki", *BZ*, 74 (1981), 7-10. Given the dubious nature of the text it is safer to rely on more certain testimony for the events of 904.

<sup>67</sup> See n. 3 above and Chapters Five and Seven below.

and his milieu that add to the sum of knowledge on the life and deeds of Leo VI. The most significant of these must be the guide on foreign affairs that Constantine produced for his own son Romanos II between 948-952, known as the *De Administrando Imperio*.<sup>68</sup> This text is vital in proving that Leo's military record is not as appalling as the Logothete makes out. Amongst the stories relating to military affairs in the west, north and east of the empire of Leo VI its information on the creation and reorganisation of themes and the intense diplomatic activity with Krikorikios of Taron is of especial note. It also touches on more domestic matters, containing episodes relating to two of Leo's chief aides, Samonas and Himerios, and details the building of two imperial galleys by the emperor. The *Book of Themes* is also of interest, relating Leo's importance in the creation and development of some themes and mentioning known people and episodes from the reign.<sup>69</sup> The *Book of Ceremonies* is naturally significant, and also records ceremonies that Leo was involved in either as a participant or as an augments or creator.<sup>70</sup> It was in this work that Philotheos's *Kletorologion* was preserved, and it also reveals that Leo commissioned Leo Katakalon to produce a work on imperial expeditions, which Constantine VII later found and exploited.<sup>71</sup> It also describes the forces amassed for a Cretan expedition under Leo. Whilst Leo may not have got his own *Life* he does feature in that of Basil, as an imperial son and heir whose particular qualities were mildness and wisdom, depicted in mosaic and educated by Photios, as the client and heir of Basil's own Peloponnesian patroness Danelis, and above all as the innocent and passive victim of Basil's detested favourite Theodore Santabarenos.

The *Life of Euthymios* is not the sole hagiographical work touching on the reign. One of the most significant others is the *Life of Theophano*,

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<sup>68</sup> *Constantine Porphyrogenitus De Administrando Imperio*, I, *Text and Translation*, Gy. Moravcsik and R. J. H. Jenkins, *DOT* I, *CFHB* I (Washington DC, 1967), and *Constantine Porphyrogenitus De Administrando Imperio*, II, *Commentary*, R. J. H. Jenkins (London, 1962). See also B. Beaud, 'Le savoir et le monarque: le *Traité sur les nations* de l'empereur byzantin Constantin VII Porphyrogénète', *Annales ESC*, 45 (1990), 551-564.

<sup>69</sup> See A. Pertusi, *Costantino Porfirogenito De Thematibus* (Vatican City, 1952); *Constantinus Porphyrogenitus*, III, *De Thematibus*, ed. I Bekker, *CSHB* (Bonn, 1840), 11-64.

<sup>70</sup> *Constantinus Porphyrogenitus*, I, *De Cerimoniis Aulae Byzantinae*, ed. I. I. Reiske, *CSHB* (Bonn, 1829); A. Vogt, *Constantin VII Porphyrogénète. Le livre des cérémonies*, I, *Texte, Commentaire* (Paris, 1935), II, *Texte, Commentaire* (Paris, 1967).

<sup>71</sup> For Constantine's use of the work of Katakalon see J. F. Haldon, *Constantine Porphyrogenitus. Three Treatises on Imperial Military Expeditions*, *CFHB* 28 (Vienna, 1990).

the emperor's sainted first wife.<sup>72</sup> The author<sup>73</sup> of this text, a friend of Theophano's family, describes not just the life and death of Theophano but is especially concerned to relate the benefits the saint brought to his family in the way of miraculous cures. Strikingly the *Life* makes no mention of the tension between Leo and Theophano, and Rydén has described it as 'a quite competent cover-up of sad historical facts'.<sup>74</sup> It does however provide information about episodes from Leo's early life, such as his marriage to Theophano, his imprisonment and the circumstances of his release. Remarkably it preserves a positive image of Stylianos Zaoutzes, a fact which indicates that it was written when Stylianos was still in favour, or at least that it has preserved an early version of the *Life*.

Most of the other existing *Lives* touch on Leo and his reign in a much less direct fashion. The *Life of Constantine the Jew* is of note since it includes an episode relating to Leo's imprisonment.<sup>75</sup> It records that Constantine, a converted Jew who became a monk and resided on Mount Olympos, visited Constantinople when Leo was in prison under the threat of death. At this time Constantine predicted to the monks with whom he was staying that Leo would be released, accede to the throne on his father's death and that his subjects would benefit from his rule.<sup>76</sup> There is evident pro-Leo sentiment; again he is the innocent victim, again he is loved by the populace of Constantinople, and his future rule is described in terms of approval, all of which inspires the conclusion that the author of the *Life* lived during Leo's reign.<sup>77</sup> An episode where Leo's sister Anna consults Constantine is also of note.

Several episodes in the *Life of Blasios* also involve the emperor.<sup>78</sup> Blasios was a native of a suburb of Amorion, and had served in

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<sup>72</sup> E. Kurtz, 'Zwei Griechische Texte über die Hl. Theophano, die Gemahlin Kaisers Leo VI', *Mémoires de l'Académie Impériale des Sciences de St-Petersbourg*, eighth series, *Classe Historico-Philologique*, III/2 (1898), 1-65. See also A. Alexakis, 'Leo VI, Theophano, a *Magistros* called Slokakas, and the *Vita Theophano* (BHG 1794)', *Byzantinische Forschungen*, 21 (1995), 45-56.

<sup>73</sup> Alexakis, 'Slokakas', argues that the author was the *magistros* Slokakas, but fails to convince.

<sup>74</sup> L. Rydén, 'New Forms of Hagiography: Heroes and Saints', *The 17th International Byzantine Congress. Major Papers* (Washington DC, 1986), 537-551, esp. 545-546.

<sup>75</sup> AASS, Nov IV, 627-656.

<sup>76</sup> The *Life* does not say that Constantine interceded with Basil for Leo's release as asserted by G. P. Majeska, 'The Body of St. Theophano the Empress and the Convent of St. Constantine', *BSI*, 38 (1977), 14-21. This undermines his argument that the monastery of St Constantine that Theophano built was dedicated to Constantine the Jew as a sign of her gratitude, for she had no need to be grateful to this man.

<sup>77</sup> Grégoire, 'Acta Sanctorum', 804-805. On the *Life* see also Rydén, 'Forms', 547.

<sup>78</sup> AASS, Nov IV, 656-669.

Constantinople as one of the patriarch Ignatios's clergy before ending up in Rome via Bulgaria. He stayed in Rome for eighteen years and returned to Constantinople in the reign of Leo VI when Antony Kauleas was patriarch (893-901). He took up residence in the Studite monastery, where he was eventually buried and where his *Life* was written, probably around 930.<sup>79</sup> Blasios's contact with the emperor began on his return to Constantinople, and the author of the *Life* reveals information of interest when describing their relationship. He asserts that Leo was a customary calligrapher, that the emperor had seen Blasios in a dream, and that he issued Blasios with a chrysobull protecting the rights of the monks on Mount Athos. Other episodes and figures from the reign are mentioned too. A barbarian assault on Demetrias is referred to, the Studite monastery and its abbot Anatolios are discussed, and the patriarch Antony Kauleas is mentioned.

The *Life of Theoktista*, the story of a woman taken prisoner from Lesbos by the Arabs in the early ninth century but who managed to escape on the island of Paros, is known to have been written by Niketas the *magistros*, a familiar historical figure.<sup>80</sup> He became the father-in-law of Romanos Lekapenos's son Christopher, and was subsequently exiled for urging his son-in-law to oust his father and take power for himself. Niketas relates that he heard the story about Theoktista during a stop off on the island of Paros during a diplomatic mission to Crete in the time of Leo VI. His comments about his own life and his attitude to Leo's reign are also of interest. He asserts that he served his apprenticeship in the navy under the great Himerios, and that the fortunes of the Byzantine empire had died upon the demise of Leo VI. Such an attitude contrasts starkly with the gloomy vision of the Logothete, yet Niketas's opinion is shared by the author of a homily on the peace concluded with the Bulgarian empire in 927 who looks back upon Leo's reign as a golden age of peace and prosperity.<sup>81</sup>

It is notable that all the above *Lives*, just like that of Euthymios, convey an extremely positive image of Leo VI. The one exception to this trend is the conjectured *Life of Niketas David*, conjectured because

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<sup>79</sup> Grégoire, 'Blaise', 413-414.

<sup>80</sup> AASS, Nov IV, 221-233. See also Rydén, 'Forms', 546. For Niketas see L. G. Westerink, *Nicetas magistros. Lettres d'un exilé (928-946)* (Paris, 1973).

<sup>81</sup> See R. J. H. Jenkins, 'The Peace with Bulgaria (927) Celebrated by Theodore Daphnopates', *Polychronion. Festschrift Franz Dolger zum 75. Geburtstag* (Heidelberg, 1966), 287-303, repr. *Studies on*, XXI.

this text only exists in fragmentary form.<sup>82</sup> The evident hero of these fragments is the figure Niketas, the one time pupil of Arethas and one of the most vociferous opponents of the emperor's fourth marriage.<sup>83</sup> It is no surprise then that in this text Leo is portrayed as a sinning and savage tyrant in the mould of iconoclastic persecutors and martyr-making governors. Here Leo is certainly not 'most wise' but in fact 'most lewd'. However the fragments are of undoubted interest when the stereotypes are set to one side. There is intriguing information regarding Niketas's trials and imprisonment under Leo and the emperor's concern for the succession of his son Constantine.

In addition to single *Lives* there are collections recording the feast days of various saints and events, where a small entry is usually also included giving detail upon these subjects. The most notable of these is the *Synaxarion of Constantinople*, which was probably compiled under the emperor Constantine VII.<sup>84</sup> Here there is much information touching on Leo's reign, such as details on his brother Stephen, the patriarch Antony Kauleas, the empress Theophano again, the eunuch Constantine, and the relics of Lazaros that were brought to Constantinople by the emperor. One striking absence is Euthymios. Another curious feature is an episode concerning the curing of the empress Zoe, Leo's second wife, by the laying on of the relic of the girdle of the Virgin, an episode that has particular chronological ramifications.<sup>85</sup>

Several non-Byzantine authors and texts also deserve mention. Of these the most significant is the Arab chronicler Tabari. Tabari, who died in 923, chronicled events from the beginning of the world down to 910 AD and provides information on military and diplomatic

<sup>82</sup> See B. Flusin, 'Un fragment inédit de la vie d'Euthyme le patriarche?', *TM*, 9 (1985), 119-131, and 10 (1987), 233-260.

<sup>83</sup> For Niketas see also Westerink, 'Niketas the Paphlagonian'. Niketas himself was an active literary figure during Leo's reign, and one of his most notable works is the *Life of Ignatios*, *PG* 105, 489-574. This *Life* is noted for its hostility to Photios, but it also alludes to military failures and ecclesiastical scandals affecting the empire, and these are taken as references to the reign of Leo VI: see R. J. H. Jenkins, 'A Note on Nicetas David Paphlago and the *Vita Ignatii*', *DOP*, 19 (1965), 241-247, repr. *Studies on*, IX.

<sup>84</sup> *AASS*, Propylaeum Novembris.

<sup>85</sup> See Karlin-Hayter, 'Théophano', 13-14. The episode also appears in the *Menologion of Basil II*, *PG* 117, 13-614, esp. 613, and in a homily of Leo's spiritual father Euthymios: for this homily and Euthymios's other works see Jugic, 'Homélie mariales', esp. 463-514, and *PO*, 19 (1925-26), 287-526, esp. 439-455.

events from Leo's lifetime.<sup>86</sup> His testimony is particularly appreciated given the inadequacies of the Logothete record. Another Arab historian worthy of mention is Masudi (896-956), who often has snippets of unique information on Byzantine-Arab affairs during the reign, no doubt picked up during his wide-ranging travels; it is known that he met Leo of Tripoli in 921, a man who caused that Byzantines much trouble as an effective naval commander.<sup>87</sup>

Of western writers the one who has most to say about Leo is the famed Liudprand of Cremona, who probably picked up stories about the emperor during his diplomatic visits to the city of Constantinople, particularly that of 949 to the emperor Constantine VII.<sup>88</sup> From the pages of his *Antapodosis* Leo leaps out as a mischievous figure, suggesting that his behaviour evinced by his surprise visit to Psamathia recorded by the *Life of Euthymios* was more typical than might otherwise be guessed. Liudprand also fascinates with his details on Michael III and Basil I, and on the Bulgar Symeon, Leo's archenemy.

The *Russian Primary Chronicle* is also noteworthy, for it refers to Byzantium's relations with the Rus during Leo's reign. It is a twelfth-century document written in Slavonic, and it details the assault of Oleg the prince of Kiev on the Constantinople of Leo VI in 907, and the resultant treaties.<sup>89</sup> Given the unusual nature of this text its evidence was once hotly debated and denied, but due primarily to the work of Vasiliev it is generally accepted that the information does have some historical validity.<sup>90</sup>

The above survey of sources has by no means been exhaustive but has simply sought to highlight those texts that are of particular significance for the study of Leo VI and his reign. A wealth of other items do have relevance and importance, such as letters, poems, inscriptions, seals, coins, documents, works of art, and incidental notes in

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<sup>86</sup> See *The History of al-Tabari*, vol. 1, *General Introduction and From the Creation to the Flood*, tr. and ann. F. Rosenthal (New York, 1989), vol. 37, *The Abbasid Recovery*, tr. P. M. Fields, ann. J. Lassner (New York, 1987), and vol. 38, *The Return of the Caliphate to Baghdad*, tr. and ann. F. Rosenthal (New York, 1985). See also Vasiliev, *Byzance et les Arabes*, II, 2, 4-23.

<sup>87</sup> *Masudi. The Meadows of Gold. The Abbasids*, tr. P. Lunde and C. Stone (London, 1989); Vasiliev, *Byzance et les Arabes*, II, 2, esp. 31-43. For other pertinent Arab historians see Vasiliev, *Byzance et les Arabes*, II, 2.

<sup>88</sup> See *Die Werke Liudprand von Cremona*, ed. J. Becker, *Scriptores Rerum Germanicarum* (Hanover and Leipzig, 1915).

<sup>89</sup> *The Russian Primary Chronicle*, tr. and edd. S. H. Cross and O. P. Sherbowitz-Wetzor, first edition (Cambridge Massachusetts, 1953).

<sup>90</sup> Vasiliev, 'Second Russian Attack'. See also S. Franklin and J. Shepard, *The Emergence of Rus 750-1200* (London and New York, 1996), 103-108.

other chronicles, histories and saints' *Lives*. Notice and discussion of these, as well as elaboration on the texts and authors already cited, will appear when appropriate in the relevant Chapters.



## CHAPTER ONE

### THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE MACEDONIAN DYNASTY: THE REIGNS OF BASIL I AND LEO VI (867-912)

On 24 September 867 the Byzantine empire witnessed the establishment of a new imperial dynasty, the Macedonian dynasty, so-named because of the topographical origin of its founder Basil I (867-886). This dynasty was to be one of the longest-surviving in Byzantine history, persisting until the death of its last representative, the empress Theodora, in 1056. The period was not without its usurpers, namely Romanos I Lekapenos (920-944), Nikephoros II Phokas (963-969) and John Tzimiskes (969-976), but power always reverted to the Macedonians, not least because these usurpers never attempted to deny the imperial claim of the Macedonians but in fact justified their own positions as protectors of the dynasty. The advent and life-span of this dynasty has been hailed, and still is by some, as the 'golden age' or 'apogee' of the Byzantine empire.<sup>1</sup> Certainly its existence coincides with successful or positive aspects of the history of Byzantium. The period witnessed striking military victories over the Arabs and the Bulgars in the tenth century; a high degree of cultural influence over the neighbours of the empire, notably Russia, which converted to orthodox Christianity in the late tenth century; the status of Byzantium as a significant European power; and a healthy literary and artistic output. This impression is heightened by the perceived crisis in Byzantine life both prior to the advent of the dynasty (a low-level of education and the internal division caused by Iconoclasm) and in its aftermath (a string of incompetent emperors, resulting in military crisis). However these perceptions are recognised as questionable. It is now agreed that a Macedonian 'Renaissance' did not spring out of the blue, but owed much to the efforts of the previous Amorian

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<sup>1</sup> For the idea of golden age see Ostrogorsky, *State*; for apogee see J. J. Norwich, *Byzantium: The Apogee* (Harmondsworth, 1991). Jenkins, *Imperial Centuries*, 183, asserts that Basil 'inaugurated the greatest and most glorious dynasty ever to sit on the Byzantine throne', and notes that the life of the dynasty 'coincided with the empire's greatest military and cultural expansion'. Vogt, *Basile*, 424-425, certainly saw the establishment of Macedonian rule by Basil as a significant and positive occasion for the empire. Diehl, *Byzantine Portraits*, 170, asserts that Basil was 'a clever and successful adventurer, and a great statesman to boot, who by his government laid the foundations of two centuries of glory and splendour for the Byzantine empire'.

dynasty (820-867), as well as the impulse of Iconoclasm itself.<sup>2</sup> It is also questioned whether the political fortunes of the empire did only take a turn for the better with the advent of the Macedonians.<sup>3</sup> Further the political power and stability of the empire from the death of Theodora to the fall of Constantinople in 1204 to the Fourth Crusade is not to be underestimated, and the literary output of this period is perhaps the most impressive in Byzantine cultural history.<sup>4</sup> Despite these questions of interpretation the life of the Macedonian dynasty is still obviously a significant portion of the history of the empire as a whole. It should however be recognised that the life of the dynasty itself is marked by phases of development, both positive and negative. For instance in the early years of the dynasty, the empire had to deal with the serious threat presented by both the navy and the army of the Arabs, and by the recently-Christianised restless neighbouring kingdom of Bulgaria. It was only later in the tenth century that Byzantium could go on the offensive and expand, though one may wonder if this success in the end brought about further difficulties for the empire. A problem that began to bedevil the empire in the later life of the dynasty was that of the threat presented to the status quo by the ambitions and alliances of the wealthy élite, the 'powerful'.<sup>5</sup> This book is concerned with an early stage of the life of the dynasty, specifically the reign of its second emperor Leo VI (886-912), but before examining key issues of this period it is necessary to provide a context. A description of the establishment of the dynasty by Basil I and an overview of his reign will be given. An overview of the reign of his successor Leo VI will also be given, as the main body of the book tends to focus on specific aspects rather than presenting an exhaustive narrative.

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<sup>2</sup> See Lemerle, *Humanism*, esp. 121-169; *Iconoclasm*, edd. A. Bryer and J. Herrin (Birmingham, 1977).

<sup>3</sup> See for instance W. Treadgold, *The Byzantine Revival 780-842* (Stanford, 1988), who in contrast to Bury, *Eastern Roman Empire*, ends his account with the death of Theophilos, not the accession of Basil I. A notable rehabilitation of the reputation of the emperor Michael III has also proceeded apace over the years: see for example Ostrogorsky, *State*, 217-232, who identified the reign of Michael III as the dawn of the golden age; E. Kislinger, 'Michael III.—Image und Realität', *EOS*, 75 (1987), 387-400.

<sup>4</sup> For the post-Macedonian period see for instance M. Angold, *The Byzantine Empire, 1025-1204: A Political History* (London, 1984); *Alexios I Komnenos*, edd. M. E. Mullett and D. Smythe (BBTT 4.1, Belfast, 1996); P. Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos, 1143-1180* (Cambridge, 1993). For economic strength see A. Harvey, *Economic Expansion in the Byzantine Empire 900-1200* (Cambridge, 1990).

<sup>5</sup> See Cheynet, *Pouvoir et contestations*; R. Morris, 'The Powerful and the Poor in Tenth-Century Byzantium: Law and Reality', *Past and Present*, 73 (1976), 3-27; Toynbee, *Constantine*, 145-176.

One of the key features of the emergence of Basil the Macedonian as an emperor was its sheer unpredictability; who but a wise-woman or an author writing with the benefit of hindsight could have predicted that a poor provincial from the environs of Adrianople armed only with a formidable strength and a way with horses would one day accede to the throne of Byzantium?<sup>6</sup> Yet to a certain extent this fact should not surprise, for it is merely an extreme expression of a fact of Byzantine life: that of social mobility.<sup>7</sup> Indeed the case of Basil I does have a parallel in the early sixth century, for Justin I (518-527) too had come to Constantinople as a poor provincial from Illyria to make his career.<sup>8</sup> The unexpected rise of Basil and the obscurity of his origins resulted in one of the most striking features of the history of the early Macedonian dynasty, a developed mythology of its own creation, as exemplified by the *Life of Basil* written at the request of his imperial grandson Constantine VII (912-959), but also reflected in earlier works such as Leo VI's *Epitaphios* on his parents, and art and literature from Basil's own reign.<sup>9</sup> Thus it was shown that Basil was the instrument of God and that his reign was divinely-ordained, and later it emerged that Basil, although obscure, did have notable ancestors in Constantine the Great and Tiridates the Armenian king.<sup>10</sup> This mythologising, though an important and interesting process, can cause severe problems for the historian, for it obscures the details of Basil's early life by concentrating on the marvellous. For instance the Logothete version of his early life asserts that he was born during the reign of Michael I (811-813) and then carried off across the Danube with other provincials in the aftermath of an attack on Adrianople by the Bulgarian khan Krum during the reign of Leo V (813-820), and that he was twenty-five years old when he returned to Byzantine

<sup>6</sup> Of course the prediction of the wise-woman is merely an expression of the hindsight of the author of the *Life of Basil*. For the prediction see *VB*, 225-226.

<sup>7</sup> See for instance M. W. Herlong, *Kinship and Social Mobility in Byzantium, 717-959*, PhD thesis (Washington DC, 1986).

<sup>8</sup> H. B. Dewing, *Procopius*, VI (Cambridge Massachusetts, 1935), 68-69.

<sup>9</sup> See Gy. Moravcsik, 'Sagen und Legenden über Kaiser Basilius I', *DOP*, 15 (1961), 59-126; P. A. Agapitos, 'Η εικόνα του αυτοκράτορα Βασιλείου Α' στη φιλομακεδονική γραμματεία 867-959', *Hell*, 40 (1989), 285-322; A. Markopoulos, 'An Anonymous Laudatory Poem in Honor of Basil I', *DOP*, 46 (1992), 225-232; C. Jolivet-Levy, 'L'image du pouvoir dans l'art byzantin à l'époque de la dynastie macédonienne', *Byz*, 57 (1987), 441-470.

<sup>10</sup> The glorious Armenian ancestry seems to have been contributed by Photios (*Ps.-Sym*, 689; *VI*, 565), whilst the author of the *Life of Basil* seems to be the first to assert that Basil's mother was actually related to Constantine the Great, as well as Alexander (*VB*, 215-216); see A. Markopoulos, 'Constantine the Great in Macedonian Historiography: Models and Approaches', *New Constantines*, ed. P. Magdalino (Aldershot, 1994), 159-170, esp. 161, 163-164.

territory in the reign of Theophilos (829-842).<sup>11</sup> These assertions however seem faulty, for in later life Basil is portrayed as very much a contemporary of Michael III, and Michael was only born c. 840.<sup>12</sup> Thus it seems likely that Basil was in fact born shortly before or shortly after the return to Byzantine territory. The family background of Basil is also problematic, simply because so little is reported about his mother and father. The *Life of Basil* at least mentions Basil's parents but is more concerned with, and more detailed about, the ancestors of Basil; it does not even give the names of the mother and father.<sup>13</sup> Something can be gleaned of Basil's male siblings only because they have a role to play later in his life.<sup>14</sup> Also a source of puzzlement is when Basil married his first wife Maria, and who she was; one may wonder if she even existed.<sup>15</sup> Another confusion is his career prior to coming to Constantinople. The *Life of Basil* indicates simply a family background, whilst the chronicler says that Basil was in the service of the *strategos* of Macedonia Tzantzes<sup>16</sup>, though both indicate that Basil wanted to come to the imperial city to seek his fortune. Bearing such difficulties (and a dependence upon sources that either love or loathe Basil) in mind, a tentative sketch of Basil's origins and early career can be given.

Although Basil was born in the western half of the Byzantine empire in the theme of Macedonia, it seems clear enough that his family originally hailed from Armenia. As mentioned his family, who lived near Adrianople, were carried off over the Danube after a Bulgarian

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<sup>11</sup> *GMC*, 819.

<sup>12</sup> C. Mango, 'When was Michael III Born?', *DOP*, 21 (1967), 253-258, repr. *Image*, XIV; E. W. Brooks, 'The Age of Basil I', *BZ*, 20 (1911), 486-491, who argues that Basil was born c. 830-835. N. Adontz, 'L'âge et l'origine de l'empereur Basile I (867-886)', *Byz*, 8 (1933), 455-500, esp. 478-486 and 494-495, notes the conflict between the two main sources concerning Basil's early life, the *Life of Basil* indicating that Basil was a child on his return from Bulgaria, and himself suggests that Basil was born in 836. Jenkins, *Imperial Centuries*, 165, states baldly that Basil was born in 836, and went to Constantinople in 856 on the death of his father.

<sup>13</sup> *VB*, 220. The chronicler says nothing about Basil's parents, being content to note that Basil was born in Macedonia in the territories of Adrianople: *GMC*, 817. From the *Book of Ceremonies* it appears that Basil's mother was called Pangkalo: *De Cer.*, 648. For Basil's immediate family see Herlong, *Social Mobility*, 73-78.

<sup>14</sup> Herlong, *Social Mobility*, 76-77. It is possible that Basil also had at least one sister, since he had a brother-in-law called Christopher: Herlong, *Social Mobility*, 77-78. However it is possible that Christopher was related to Basil through Eudokia Ingerine.

<sup>15</sup> It is only the chronicler who refers to Maria: *GMC*, 828.

<sup>16</sup> *VB*, 221-222; *GMC*, 819. Adontz, 'L'âge et l'origine', 482-483, certainly accredits the version of the chronicler, as it provides a connection between Basil and his later ally Stylianos Zaoutzes, who was to become Leo's right-hand man during the first half of his reign.

raid in the reign of Leo V, only returning to Byzantine territory in the reign of Theophilos. It seems likely that Basil was only born just before or after the return in the early 830s, and by the time he decided to go to Constantinople to further himself his father was already dead. As to why Basil came to Constantinople in the early 850s the *Life of Basil* certainly presents a more mythologised view than that of the chronicler, but there seems no reason to doubt that he simply wished to try his luck in the imperial city. Both the *Life of Basil* and the chronicler, though differing in interpretation, relate broadly the same story of Basil's subsequent rise to the position of a favourite of the emperor Michael III, and then on to becoming emperor himself. This rise seems to lie in the fascination he elicited in his patrons, due mainly to his physique, but he also possessed equine skills, which is perhaps suggestive of his activities prior to his trip to Constantinople. His first ally was the *prosmonarios* of the church of St Diomedes, Nikolaos, who found the poverty-stricken Basil sleeping in the porch of the church just inside the Golden Gate on his first night in the city.<sup>17</sup> This Nikolaos took him in, and subsequently adopted him as his brother. Basil then passed into the service of Theophiltzes, a relative of the ruling Amorian dynasty, who had learnt of Basil through the brother of Nikolaos, a doctor in his service.<sup>18</sup> This doctor had recommended Basil to Theophiltzes when he heard that he was looking for a young man to work in his stables. In turn Basil finally came to the attention of the emperor Michael through Theophiltzes, who made a display of Basil's strength at an imperial party in a one-to-one combat with a Bulgar, and then had him tame the emperor's unruly horse (reminiscent of Alexander the Great and Bucephalus of course).<sup>19</sup> It is notable that the *Life of Basil* however inserts another patron into this chain, the only patron who was a woman. This was

<sup>17</sup> For Nikolaos see *VB*, 223-225; *GMC*, 819-820. Note that the *VB* describes Nikolaos as the abbot of the monastery of St Diomedes, and thus seems to be guilty of inflating both the position of Nikolaos and the site at the time of Basil's arrival: see C. Mango, 'Germia: A Postscript', *JÖB*, 41 (1991), 297-300, esp. 299. It is noteworthy that on becoming emperor Basil rewarded Nikolaos, acting as benefactor to the church and his family: *VB*, 316-317; *GMC*, 842-843. Also of note is that the site of the church of St Diomedes continued to be a destination of Macedonian imperial ceremony in the reign of Leo VI, as testified by the *Kletorologion* of Philotheos: see Oikonomidès, *Listes*, 221.5-9.

<sup>18</sup> *GMC*, 820. The *Life of Basil* cuts the doctor out of its account, passing Basil straight from Nikolaos to Theophiltzes: *VB*, 224-225. However there seems no reason to doubt the chronicler, who is very well informed about Nikolaos and his family.

<sup>19</sup> *VB*, 229-230, 230-231; *GMC*, 816-817. It is the chronicler's turn to simplify his story, for he makes no mention of the fight with the Bulgar. For comment on Basil as a wrestler see M. B. Poliakoff, *Combat Sports in the Ancient World. Competition, Violence, and Culture* (New Haven/London, 1987), 140-141.

the rich Peloponnesian widow Danelis, and the context of this meeting was a mission to the Peloponnese undertaken by Theophiltzes, in whose service Basil then was.<sup>20</sup> Like Nikolaos Danelis forged a relationship with Basil, making her son and Basil become spiritual brothers. Danelis was also said to have endowed Basil with great wealth and property. Whether all the details of these stories of Basil's advancement are believed or not one thing seems clear, people were intrigued and impressed by Basil, and wanted to appropriate him for themselves. Thus through such a chain of relationships in 856/857 Basil ultimately acquired the arch-patron of Byzantine society, the emperor.<sup>21</sup>

However Basil not only received the patronage of the emperor, but was to go on to become his partner in power and then his replacement. Following his career from the moment of the supposed taming of the horse, he is first found in the *hetaireia*, the imperial bodyguard, under the command of a man called Andrew<sup>22</sup>, and given a position in line with his equine skills. Subsequently he was promoted to the position of protostrator, again involving an equine dimension (and also close contact with the emperor)<sup>23</sup>, on the fall of a protostrator who was implicated in a plot against Michael's uncle Bardas, who had recently earned the enmity of his sister and Michael's mother the empress Theodora, for having despatched her aide Theoktistos and having ousted her from power in 856.<sup>24</sup> A while later in 864 Basil found himself promoted once more, and again due to the fall of someone else. In this instance he replaced the *parakoimomenos* Damianos, who had caused offence to Bardas, who had recently become caesar.<sup>25</sup> Shortly afterwards in 866 Basil rose still higher to the position of co-emperor and adopted son of the emperor, in the aftermath of the assassination of Bardas.<sup>26</sup> The next

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<sup>20</sup> *VB*, 226-228, 316-321. For comment on Danelis see S. Runciman, 'The Widow Danelis', *Études dédiées à la mémoire d'André M. Andréadès*, ed. K. Varvaressos (Athens, 1940), 425-431; E. Anagnostakes, 'Τὸ ἐπεισόδιο τῆς Δανηλίδας: Πληροφορίες καθημερινῆ βίου ἢ μυθοπλαστικὰ στοιχεῖα;', *Ἡ καθημερινή ζωὴ στὸ Βυζάντιο*, ed. C. G. Angelidi (Athens, 1989), 373-390.

<sup>21</sup> Adontz, 'L'âge et l'origine', 493, favours 856, whilst Jenkins, *Imperial Centuries*, 165, favours 857.

<sup>22</sup> This Andrew seems to be the same man who became domestic of the schools and one of Leo VI's key allies: see Herlong, *Social Mobility*, 141, but note that he mistakenly gives him the surname Krateros.

<sup>23</sup> Oikonomidès, *Listes*, 337-338.

<sup>24</sup> For the plot of Theodora and its concomitant promotion of Basil see *GMC*, 823-824; for the fall of Theoktistos and the ousting of Theodora see *GMC*, 821-823.

<sup>25</sup> For Damianos and his fall see *GMC*, 821-822, 827.

<sup>26</sup> *VB*, 235-240; *GMC*, 828-833.

stage was the violent removal of Michael himself, undertaken by Basil and his allies.<sup>27</sup> Thus Basil's rise is set against the background of a struggle for power, a struggle that eventually embroiled him too. First Michael and Bardas engineered the removal of the empress Theodora and her minister Theoktistos, then tension set in between Bardas and Michael which Basil helped to resolve, and then came the showdown between Michael and Basil themselves.

From this sketch of events tracing Basil's continued rise it is clear that Michael developed a strong attachment to the Macedonian. As to what appealed to the emperor about Basil, perhaps it was a simple appreciation of his strength and skills, or a recognition of his reliability. Some have however wondered if there was more to it than this; were Michael and Basil in fact lovers?<sup>28</sup> This would explain Michael's extreme preference for this newcomer, and certainly the sources do convey that part of Basil's attraction was his physique. The appointment of Basil to the office of *parakoimomenos* also adds fuel to this argument, for it was one that involved close physical proximity to the emperor (the name means 'the one who lies beside', and this official did sleep in the emperor's bedroom), and it was unusual to appoint a non-eunuch to this office as it was meant to be exclusive to eunuchs.<sup>29</sup> This theory is perhaps obscured by the fact that the chronicle asserts that Michael had a mistress, Eudokia Ingerine, and that he forced Basil to marry her c. 865, even though the emperor's affair with her was to continue.<sup>30</sup> Perhaps the line that Michael found Basil useful and reliable is the safest; he gave the emperor access to Eudokia (if one believes that story) and certainly aided him in the destruction of Bardas. Yet the relationship should not be considered solely from Michael's point of view; what did Basil make of his patron, and the situation that he found himself in? At what point did Basil start to consider his own interests? This issue is exemplified by the assassination of Bardas. Was it Michael who wished to remove his ambitious

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<sup>27</sup> *VB*, 254; *GMC*, 836-838. Note the brevity and vagueness of the account of the murder in the *Life of Basil*, which is further distinguished by its emphasis on the faults of Michael.

<sup>28</sup> Most notably Jenkins, 'Portrait', 76, and *Imperial Centuries*, 165. It is interesting to note that Jenkins considers Michael's homosexuality as a further bad quality, to rank alongside (or even exceed) his alcoholism, weakness and faithlessness. M. E. Mullett, 'Byzantium: A Friendly Society?', *Past and Present*, 118 (1988), 3-24, alludes to the homo-erotic quality of the relationship between Basil and Michael as portrayed by the chronicler. See now also J. Boswell, *The Marriage of Likeness* (London, 1995), 237-239.

<sup>29</sup> See Oikonomidès, *Listes*, 305.

<sup>30</sup> *GMC*, 828. For Basil's marriage to Eudokia see also *VB*, 235. For Eudokia see especially Mango, 'Eudocia'.

uncle, or did Basil incite the murder of Bardas in the first place, with his eyes fixed firmly on his own advancement? As for the eventual removal of Michael himself, was this an act of self-preservation on the part of Basil, or an act of cold-blooded desire to secure the throne? These conflicting images are again part and parcel of the source problem connected with Basil; once he had secured sole rule the mythologising began, and this affected how Michael was portrayed too, for he had to be a bad emperor to justify Basil's liquidation of him as an agent of God. However even if a more positive image of Michael can be reconstructed today, this does not necessarily mean that Basil must be the bad guy. It does seem likely that Michael wanted Bardas out of the way, simply because it appears that the uncle was eclipsing the emperor as the real power of the day, and indeed Bardas may have contemplated removing Michael himself. As for the murder of the emperor, it could be argued that Basil did feel uncertain about Michael once he had become co-emperor, so that assassination was perhaps inevitable, one way or the other.

With the assassination of Michael by Basil and his allies history began to be written from their point of view, concentrating on the denigration of Michael and the promotion of Basil.<sup>31</sup> Thus Basil emerged as the chosen agent of God, whose imperial destiny had been foretold by signs and prophetic visions. Basil was cast as a new David, the divinely-sanctioned replacement for the compromised Michael.<sup>32</sup> This propaganda also encompassed the establishment of a Macedonian palace complex (incorporating the New Church) and of ceremonies and feasts commemorating the foundation of the dynasty, some of which were played out in the new Macedonian architectural setting.<sup>33</sup> Such image-making undoubtedly played an important part in the establishment of Basil's rule, providing a justification for his seizure of power, but more tangible methods of control and the securing of the throne were also required.

Primarily Basil needed to establish a dynasty, something that Michael had never managed, for he had no children.<sup>34</sup> It seems that Basil was very quick to associate his eldest son, Constantine, in power

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<sup>31</sup> Note however the existence of a negative tradition about Basil also, as reflected by the chronicle account.

<sup>32</sup> For this Davidic ideology see Chapter Five below.

<sup>33</sup> See especially P. Magdalino, 'Observations on the New Ecclesia of Basil I', *JÖB*, 37 (1987), 51-64.

<sup>34</sup> For Michael's childlessness see in particular Jenkins, *Imperial Centuries*, 198-199. However the chronicle asserts that Michael was the real father of Basil's sons Constantine, Leo and Stephen, and some scholars believe that Leo was indeed the son of Michael. For consideration of this issue see Chapter Two below.

with him. His second son Leo was soon also linked in power, and Basil appears to have considered that this duo was sufficient, for a third son, Alexander, was only promoted when Constantine died in 879. Basil also realised the necessity that his sons should be married for the production of heirs; he negotiated a betrothal for Constantine with the daughter of the Carolingian king and emperor Louis II of Italy, and married Leo to Theophano, a kinswoman, soon after Leo had become heir-apparent in 879.<sup>35</sup> It was the duo of Leo and Alexander, with the former as senior partner, that succeeded Basil on his death in 886. Thus sharing imperial power was a method of security and stability, but it was equally important for Basil not to spread imperial power too widely and thus too thinly; the example of the relations between the Amorians Michael, Theodora and Bardas was warning enough. Basil's own siblings, though they had helped him in his rise to power via the murders of Bardas and Michael, were kept firmly out of the imperial limelight.<sup>36</sup> Further Basil ensured that all his daughters became nuns—no troublesome sons-in-law could thus result.<sup>37</sup> Such an attitude to power-sharing seems to be a typical feature of middle Byzantine history, an attitude that was to change with the advent of the dynasty of the Komnenoi in the late eleventh century, a dynasty that did put the focus very much on family rule.<sup>38</sup>

Another means to success was the relationship between emperor and church; the more settled church affairs were, the more likely it was that the emperor would have a good reputation. On Basil's accession the church was certainly not in a settled state.<sup>39</sup> This was largely due to the fact that under Bardas and Michael in 858 the patriarch Ignatios had been deposed, and replaced with a relative of the imperial family, Photios, who had until his appointment been pursuing a career in the imperial secular administration.<sup>40</sup> It seems that the reason for Ignatios's removal was the fact that he was causing strife for Bardas, by refusing him admittance to church since he was believed to be having an affair with his own widowed daughter-in-

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<sup>35</sup> For Constantine's betrothal see Jenkins, *Imperial Centuries*, 187; for Leo's marriage to Theophano see *GMC*, 846; *VT*, 6-7.

<sup>36</sup> See Herlong, *Social Mobility*, 74-78; Vogt, 'Jeunesse', 399.

<sup>37</sup> *VB*, 264.

<sup>38</sup> For this middle Byzantine attitude to family see Herlong, *Social Mobility*, 24; see also Chapter Nine below for further consideration of this phenomenon. For the Komnenian attitude to family see for instance Magdalino, *Empire*, 180-201.

<sup>39</sup> See F. Dvornik, *The Photian Schism. History and Legend* (Cambridge, 1948); Jenkins, *Imperial Centuries*, 168-182.

<sup>40</sup> For Photios's early life and career see in particular H. Ahrweiler, 'Sur la carrière de Photios avant son patriarcat', *BZ*, 58 (1965), 348-363. Photios is considered further in Chapter Three below.

law; the reason that Bardas and Michael gave was that Ignatios had been plotting against the imperial family.<sup>41</sup> Problems arose not only due to Photios's lightening promotion, but primarily because the supporters of Ignatios sought the backing of the pope in Rome, who, although his papal legates had accepted the situation at a council in Constantinople in 861, then refused to accept Photios as the patriarch of Constantinople. Further tensions ensued over whether Rome or Byzantium had spiritual authority over the nascent Christian kingdom of Bulgaria, and in August 867 Photios held another council in Constantinople, deposing the pope. On Basil's accession his concern was to settle these problems, and thus the acts of the council of 867 were revoked, Photios deposed and Ignatios restored. The fact that Photios was also a relative of the assassinated Michael, and was said to have voiced his opposition to the new emperor, may also have prompted Basil to take this action. However despite an initial exile to the monastery of Skepi Photios found himself recalled to imperial society in the early 870s, acting as tutor to the imperial children, and subsequently he again became patriarch on the death of Ignatios in 877. This time the transition was smooth, and Photios was given papal approval at a council held in Constantinople in 880. As to why Basil had recalled Photios in the first place, it seems that it was the sensible thing to do; not only did Photios have much support within Byzantine society and among the episcopate, but it appears that Basil himself was not blind to the particular talents that Photios possessed that could be harnessed to the benefit of the imperial regime. Photios was tutor not only to the younger members of the dynasty, but to Basil also, supplying him with a glorious genealogy for the dynasty, promoting the Davidic and Constantinian ideology of the dynasty, and aiding in the emperor's legislative programme, the production of a compilation of the Justinianic corpus in Greek known as the *Basilika* as well as other handbooks of Byzantine law.<sup>42</sup> Such activity was also designed to stamp Macedonian authority upon Byzantium. Thus it was that Photios found himself back at court once more, and partaking in a staged show of reconciliation with the patriarch that he had replaced, Ignatios. This enabled Basil to pose as the restorer of ecclesiastical peace, which he hoped would redound to his credit. This establishment of peace in the church was marked by a significant imperial decision, one that Basil no doubt hoped would one day result in easing imperial relations with the church; the emperor decided to dedicate his third son Stephen to an ecclesiastical career,

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<sup>41</sup> See F. Dvornik, 'Patriarch Ignatius and Caesar Bardas', *BSI*, 27 (1966), 7-22.

<sup>42</sup> For this legal activity see Van der Wal and Lokin, *Sources du droit*.

setting him on the path to the patriarchate. This objective was carried through by Leo VI, and then imitated in the reign of Romanos Lekapenos.<sup>43</sup> Other strands by which Basil hoped to promote his credentials in the ecclesiastical sphere were by engaging in an apparently extensive programme of restoring as well as creating churches and their associated structures<sup>44</sup>, launching a conversion of the Jews<sup>45</sup>, and assailing the dualistic Paulicians of Tephrike on the eastern frontier.<sup>46</sup>

This last aspect raises another sphere through which an emperor could seek to prove himself, military affairs. By the reign of Basil the major military headache for Byzantium was the eastern frontier, where she bordered on Arab territory; the previously aggressive and pagan Bulgars had converted to Christianity in the reign of Michael and had since proved docile.<sup>47</sup> The eastern frontier had two main foci, Tarsus and Melitene, and of these two it was the more eastern, Melitene, that Basil was particularly concerned with, for the Paulicians of Tephrike assisted the Arab raids on the Byzantine territories that were launched from there.<sup>48</sup> Basil took part in several campaigns against this region, and such direct imperial participation was only to be expected, for Byzantine emperors had been campaigning in person ever since the advent of Heraclius in the seventh century, who temporarily put paid to the possibility of non-campaigning emperors. In his campaigns against the city of Tephrike Basil did achieve ultimate success in 872, thanks to his in-law Christopher. As for Melitene, and the nearby Germanikeia, he continued to campaign with varying degrees of success, even holding a triumph in 878.<sup>49</sup> In

<sup>43</sup> For further consideration of this tactic see Chapter Three below.

<sup>44</sup> *VB*, 321-341, tr. C. Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire, 312-1453, Sources and Documents* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1972), 192-199.

<sup>45</sup> *VB*, 341-342; *GMC*, 841. See A. Sharf, *Byzantine Jewry from Justinian to the Fourth Crusade* (London, 1971).

<sup>46</sup> *VB*, 266-276; *GMC*, 841. See also Vogt, *Basile*, 322-325; P. Lemerle, 'L'histoire des Pauliciens d'Asie Mineure d'après des sources grecques', *TM*, 5 (1973), 1-144; S. Runciman, *The Medieval Manichee: A Study of the Christian Dualist Heresy* (Cambridge, 1947); Toynbee, *Constantine*, 688-684.

<sup>47</sup> For the conversion of the Bulgars see H. Mayr-Harting, 'Two Conversions to Christianity. The Bulgarians and the Anglo-Saxons', *The Stenton Lecture* (University of Reading, 1994); C. Hannick, 'Les nouvelles Chrétientés du monde byzantin: Russes, Bulgares et Serbs', *Histoire du Christianisme*, IV (Paris, 1993), 909-939, esp. 921-937; Browning, *Bulgaria*, 55.

<sup>48</sup> For the tit-for-tat raiding warfare of this period see J. F. Haldon and H. Kennedy, 'The Arab-Byzantine Frontier in the Eighth and Ninth Centuries: Military Organisation and Society in the Borderlands', *ZRV*, 19 (1980), 79-116.

<sup>49</sup> The details of the triumph are recorded by Constantine VII: see Haldon, *Three Treatises*, 140-147. M. McCormick, *Eternal Victory* (Cambridge, 1986), 154-157, argues that there was also a triumph in 873.

conjunction with this apparent concentration on the eastern extreme of the frontier it is clear that the raiding which so characterised Arab-Byzantine warfare continued in relation to Tarsus, the Byzantines suffering a notable defeat in this region in 883.<sup>50</sup> At this period the Arabs were also increasingly successful at sea, and there is evidence to suggest that Basil did respond to this threat by establishing more naval themes.<sup>51</sup> However it was not just in the east that the Arabs presented a problem for the Byzantines. From Africa they had launched themselves not only into Spain but into Sicily and thence into southern Italy as well, and it was Basil's response to this western problem that is one of the most distinctive features of his reign.<sup>52</sup> This western factor may have added to his desire to settle the ecclesiastical conflict between east and west so as to enable efficient response against the common enemy. In 868 Basil also sought the alliance and co-operation of Louis II of Italy<sup>53</sup>, holding out the prospect of a marriage alliance between his heir Constantine and the daughter of the Carolingian. However this alliance collapsed in the ensuing political tension over Louis's imperial status. Despite this set back there was an increased Byzantine presence in southern Italy during Basil's reign, its most notable achievements being the occupation of Otranto in 873 and the retaking of Bari in 876.<sup>54</sup> Despite such successes the picture still carries a bleak air due to the fall of Syracuse to the Arabs in 878, which the Byzantines were unable to prevent.<sup>55</sup> Thus whilst a Byzantine presence was being reasserted in southern Italy, they were being forced out of Sicily, from which the Arabs could continue to assault the mainland opposite.

Despite all his attempts to establish the dynasty and justify his accession to power towards the end of his life Basil found his efforts in danger of crashing down around his ears.<sup>56</sup> First of all his eldest son

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<sup>50</sup> GMC, 847; *Tabari*, vol. 37, 143-144; Vasiliev, *Byzance et les Arabes*, II, 2, 9. For Basil and the Arabs see Vogt, *Basile*, 325-326, 331-337.

<sup>51</sup> See H. Ahrweiler, *Byzance et la mer. La marine de guerre, la politique et les institutions maritimes de Byzance aux VIIe-XVe siècles* (Paris, 1966), 99.

<sup>52</sup> See Jenkins, *Imperial Centuries*, 185-191; Vlyssidou, *Ἐξωτερικὴ πολιτικὴ καὶ ἐσωτερικὲς ἀντιδράσεις*.

<sup>53</sup> For Louis II see B. M. Kreutz, *Before the Normans. Southern Italy in the Ninth and Tenth Centuries* (Philadelphia, 1996), esp. 28-47; P. Riché, *The Carolingians*, tr. M. I. Allen (Philadelphia, 1993), esp. 179-183.

<sup>54</sup> For Basil and Italy see Vogt, *Basile*, 318-322, 326-331; J. Gay, *L'Italie méridionale et l'empire byzantin depuis l'avènement de Basile Ier jusqu'à la prise de Bari par les Normands (867-1071)*, 2 vols, I (New York, 1960, orig. publ. Paris 1904); Kreutz, *Before the Normans*, esp. 41-47.

<sup>55</sup> VB, 309-311; GMC, 843.

<sup>56</sup> For more detail on this phase see Chapter Two below.

Constantine died in 879. Whilst this was not disastrous in that Basil did have other surviving sons it was still a severe blow, for it seems that Basil had devoted much time to the training of Constantine as his successor, perhaps to the extent of neglecting his other children. Thus it was that Basil had to turn to the next in line, Leo, who was designated as heir and soon married off to an isolated relative of the dynasty, Theophano, in the hope of producing a future heir. Yet matters proved difficult. First Leo was discontented with his bride, preferring the company of the daughter of one of his father's Armenian colleagues Stylianos Zaoutzes, who commanded the emperor's bodyguard. When Basil learnt of this he put Leo firmly in his place, and forced Stylianos's daughter, Zoe, to be married off to Theodore Gouzouniates. Then things with Leo went from bad to worse, for in 883 Basil was informed by a confidant Theodore Santabarenos, a monk and bishop of Euchaita (also a close ally of the patriarch Photios), that Leo had hatched a plot against his father, and was concealing a knife in his boot with harmful intention. When it proved to be true that Leo did indeed have a knife concealed about his person Basil was convinced by Theodore's interpretation of affairs, and Leo was disinherited and imprisoned in an apartment in the palace known as the Pearl, having narrowly escaped being blinded. He was confined here for three years.

With the disgrace of Leo it seems likely that Basil's youngest son Alexander, now a teenager, stepped into the role of heir-apparent.<sup>57</sup> Yet such a move does not seem to have stemmed the crisis affecting the dynasty, for it is clear that there was unease with Basil's rule. This appears to have been fed by the fall of Leo, the apparent illness of Basil which entailed his absence from the public eye, and maybe the unsuitability of Alexander too, though this may have been as much to do with his age as his character. This situation gave rise to a plot against the dynasty, consisting of sixty-six senators, headed by John Kourkouas, which perhaps suggests that Basil had failed to secure the acceptance of the ruling élite. Luckily for Basil this plot was exposed on 25 March 886, and he swiftly crushed it. This seems to have impressed upon him the necessity for dynastic strength and stability, and so the decision was taken to release Leo from captivity and stage a reconciliation. The day for this event was carefully chosen, for it occurred on 21 July, the feast day of the prophet Elijah, who was the key divine patron of the Macedonian dynasty, having appeared in a

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<sup>57</sup> S. Tougher, 'The Bad Relations between Alexander and Leo', *BMGS*, 20 (1996), 209-212. For further detail on Alexander see Chapter Nine below.

dream to Basil's mother foretelling her son's future imperial status. This reunion and the re-establishment of Leo as Basil's heir came not a moment too soon; just over a month later Basil died from the wounds he had sustained from a bizarre hunting accident.

Thus when Leo acceded to the throne at the end of August 886 with his brother Alexander as co-emperor the dynasty had just survived a very rocky patch in its history. Leo's prime necessity, like Basil's in 867, was to establish his authority, and in large part this involved the settling of old scores. The prime target of the purge that marked the start of Leo's reign was the patriarch Photios, and his friends and family, whom it seems Leo believed had been central to the problems facing the Macedonian dynasty, for it was their machinations that had led to his fall in 883.<sup>58</sup> Thus they were deprived of their property, tonsured and exiled. Photios himself was deposed again, and then faced trial with Theodore Santabarenos, a trial that ended with Theodore being banished to Athens and blinded, and Photios withdrawing into monastic retirement. Leo also returned to the heart of the stain upon the Macedonian dynasty, the murder of Michael III; his answer was to grant the corpse of the dead emperor a public and imperial burial in Constantinople itself. Leo may have been hoping to restore Michael's memory for the good of his own dynasty, which was in reality inextricably linked with the Amorians.<sup>59</sup> A further element in the relaunching of the Macedonian dynasty was Leo's *Epitaphios* on his parents, probably composed in 888, which preempts the themes and subjects that make up the more famous *Life of Basil*.<sup>60</sup> Leo also addressed the spheres of building, ceremony and law that Basil had provided such a model for. He added to the Macedonian palace complex by restoring a bath house and also building the church and monastery of St Lazaros; he established, augmented and observed Macedonian-centred ceremony; and he completed the *Basilika*, whilst also compiling a collection of *Novels*, new laws.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> See Chapter Two and Chapter Three below.

<sup>59</sup> However some have seen the reburial of Michael as a more personal gesture, a recognition on Leo's part that he was indeed the son of Michael rather than of Basil: see Chapter Two below.

<sup>60</sup> For the *Epitaphios* see Vogt and Hausherr, 'Oraison'; Agapitos, "Ἡ εἰκόνα τοῦ αὐτοκράτορα Βασιλείου Α'".

<sup>61</sup> For Leo's bath and church see Magdalino, 'Bath', 'Revisited', 'Courtier', 'Nea'; C. Mango, 'The Palace of Marina, the Poet Palladas and the Bath of Leo VI', *Εὐφρόσυνον. Ἀφιέρωμα στὸν Μανόλη Χατζηδάκη*, I (Athens, 1991), 321-330; *GMC*, 860. For ceremonies see Magdalino, 'Elijah'; Oikonomidès, *Listes*. For legal work see Van der Wal and Lokin, *Sources du droit*, 78-89.

However like Basil Leo could not rely on such actions and gestures alone to secure his position. Unlike Basil Leo had no sons ready to hand, and this aspect of his life tends to dominate accounts of his reign, for his quest for an heir led him into conflict with the church and resulted in his own excommunication.<sup>62</sup> Leo was less than happy with his first wife (by whom he only had one child, a daughter) and took a mistress, Zoe Zaoutzaina. When Theophano died in 895/896 Leo was free to marry Zoe, whom he wished to have as his second and final wife, and as the mother of his heir. However Zoe died too, in 899/900, leaving Leo with a daughter Anna and a severe problem; in the orthodox church it was held that two marriages were the limit. However there were examples of previous Byzantine emperors who had married for a third time, namely Constantius II (337-361) and Constantine V (741-775). Thus it was not without precedent when in 900 Leo married for a third time, his bride being Eudokia Baiane. Tragedy struck the emperor again in 901, for Eudokia died in childbirth, and her infant son also died. Leo was now in uncharted waters, but did not give up the attempt to produce a male heir; he took a lover, Zoe Karbonopsina, who gave birth to a son in 905. This child was to be the future emperor Constantine VII. Leo had his son recognised by baptism and crowning in 906, but despite assurances that he would then renounce Zoe, he married for a fourth time. It was this act that led to his excommunication, and his campaign to have himself granted sanction by the church. This culminated in a synod in 907 attended by representatives of Rome, Antioch, Jerusalem and Alexandria, who granted Leo economy, despite the opposition of the patriarch of Constantinople, Nikolaos, whom Leo had had to depose prior to the meeting of the synod. Thus in the end Leo did manage to produce a son as well as secure sanction for himself, though the issue was not to lie dead and buried. Leo's desperate attempt to produce an heir who was his own son also highlights again the middle Byzantine desire not to share power with the wider family. Theoretically once Leo had had his quota of three wives his brother Alexander should then have become the focus for the matter of the production of an heir. But it is clear that Leo would not countenance this idea, obstructing Alexander's chances by separating him from his wife. Even when Leo knew he was dying and that Constantine would be left as a minor he was reluctant to leave Alexander as Constantine's partner, and toyed with the notion of leaving a guardian for his son.

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<sup>62</sup> For this aspect of Leo's reign see Chapter Six below.

As for Leo's sisters, as far as can be gathered they were still living the life of nuns.<sup>63</sup>

Leo's struggle to produce an heir highlights another of the key dimensions of any emperor's reign, his relationship with the church. Like Basil Leo wanted good relations with the ecclesiastical authorities, but more than this it seems that he wanted to dominate the church. Certainly Leo learnt the lesson from his father's reign that a patriarch could be a force to be reckoned with; of course Photios had co-operated with Basil, but only up to a certain point, for he had his own agenda to pursue. It seems that Leo was determined not to make the same mistake. He followed through Basil's intention of putting a member of the imperial family on the patriarchal throne, for his brother Stephen succeeded Photios in 886.<sup>64</sup> Such a strategy was undoubtedly sensible for it presumably meant that the emperor could take patriarchal support, and thus that of the church, for granted. Unfortunately for Leo Stephen died at a young age in 893, long before the tetragamy crisis got into its stride. However all future patriarchs of the reign can be seen as men whom Leo felt he could to a degree rely upon. The replacement for Stephen was Antony Kauleas, who was supposedly the man of Leo's own right-hand man Stylianos Zaoutzes. Together with Antony Leo presided over a union of the church in around 900, when a splinter group that had continued to oppose the patriarchate of Photios and his initiates was reconciled.<sup>65</sup> When Antony died in 901 his replacement, Nikolaos, was a friend of the emperor. It is attested that they had been fellow-students, and Leo had spared Nikolaos from the purge of Photios's relatives (of whom Nikolaos was one), and had taken him into the imperial service, where he acted as *mystikos* before becoming patriarch. Ironically it was Nikolaos who caused Leo the most headaches, for he came out in determined opposition to the emperor's fourth marriage, which had necessitated his deposition.<sup>66</sup> Leo's final patriarch Euthymios again was closely connected with the emperor, as he was Leo's spiritual father. Euthymios had been an obvious candidate for the patriarchate several times already, for he was *synkellos* since Stephen's patriarchate, a position that often saw its holder become

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<sup>63</sup> For further consideration of Leo's attitude to Alexander and to family see Chapter Nine below.

<sup>64</sup> For Photios and Stephen see Chapter Three below.

<sup>65</sup> For the union see Dvornik, *Photian Schism*, 265-271; Grumel, 'Chronologie', 6-8, 13-17; H. Grégoire, 'Études sur le neuvième siècle', *Byz*, 8 (1933), 515-550, esp. 540-550; Karlin-Hayter, *VE, Commentary*, 184-188.

<sup>66</sup> See Chapter Six below.

the succeeding patriarch. However this relationship with the emperor was notoriously stormy, and he often opposed Leo's will, which explains why the emperor had been reluctant to have him as patriarch. Yet Euthymios ultimately proved quite tractable, recognising the decision of the synod of 907 to grant Leo economy in the matter of his fourth marriage, though he did continue to refuse to recognise Zoe as *augusta* in church. Leo's desire for control is seen not only in his choice of patriarch and his treatment of these men, but also strikingly in his own status as a 'wise' emperor.<sup>67</sup> This epithet was used of Leo to a remarkable extent. Initially it seems to have been an element in the Davidic or Old Testament ideology of the Macedonian dynasty, but it also conveys the notion that Leo was a font of all knowledge, both sacred and profane. Leo's own religious role and attitudes suggest that he lived up to these notions; he was noted as a writer and deliverer of homilies, he wrote a treatise advising a monastic community on the ascetic life, he addressed ecclesiastical issues in his collection of new laws, and it seems that during a drought he even publicly prayed for rain, which duly fell. Thus Leo's perception of his religious role was inflated, to say the least, and there is a stark contrast between him and his more simple and dependent father.

In the sphere of military matters there is also a contrast between Basil and Leo; Leo was an emperor who never went on campaign.<sup>68</sup> This feature of his reign is significant, for it marks a definite break with centuries of tradition, and the start of a trend that was to continue until the advent of the emperor Nikephoros II Phokas in 963. Leo seems to have chosen this path deliberately, and cannot be accused of neglecting military matters altogether for he produced a manual on warfare called the *Taktika*, which marked the revival of this genre in Byzantine literature. Quite simply Leo was content to leave the campaigning to experienced *strategoi* whom he linked to himself by ties of friendship, men such as Andronikos Doukas and his son Constantine, Eustathios Argyros, and most famously Nikephoros Phokas, whose family continued to have a high-profile relationship with the Macedonian dynasty.<sup>69</sup> Leo settled himself at the focal point of the Byzantine empire, the imperial court of Constantinople, where he also depended on other friends, men of the civil administration

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<sup>67</sup> For a consideration of Leo's 'wise' reputation see Chapter Five below.

<sup>68</sup> See S. Tougher, 'The Imperial Thought-World of Leo VI, the Non-Campaigning Emperor of the Ninth Century', *Dead or Alive? Byzantium in the Ninth Century*, ed. L. Brubaker (forthcoming); also Chapter Seven below.

<sup>69</sup> For Leo and the *strategoi* see Chapter Eight below.

and the imperial household, like Stylianos Zaoutzes and the eunuch Samonas.<sup>70</sup>

Another difference between Basil and Leo was the extent of the threat posed by the enemies of Byzantium.<sup>71</sup> Not only did Leo still have to deal with the Arab problem, which became even more pronounced during his reign especially at sea, but he had to cope with war against the Bulgars, for they had again become aggressive, despite their Christianisation. The problems with the Bulgars stemmed from the fact that they had a new khan, Symeon, the son of the Boris who had converted under Michael III. The advent of Symeon in 893 witnessed a rise in Bulgarian nationalism, and when Byzantium disregarded complaints of extortion inflicted upon Bulgarian merchants at Thessalonike, Symeon resorted to war in 894. A series of campaigns in Byzantine territory followed throughout the following years, each witnessing the triumph of the Bulgars over their opponents. Ultimately in 896 Leo had to conclude a peace with the Bulgars that seems to have entailed an annual payment to Bulgaria by Byzantium. This ostensibly saw the pacification of the Bulgars for the rest of Leo's reign, though they were a factor that needed constant thought, and would again plague the empire until the sudden death of Symeon himself in 927.

As for the Arabs, their threat continued to be an issue on the eastern and western frontier, and at sea their harassment of Byzantium reached a crescendo. On the eastern frontier the custom of raiding focused on Tarsus and Melitene continued, sometimes witnessing Byzantine success, sometimes Arab success. Leo also pursued diplomatic goals, with the likes of Taron, Armenia and Georgia, as well as administrative change designed to strengthen the frontier, such as the establishment of the theme of Mesopotamia.<sup>72</sup> In the west the African Arabs continued to dog Byzantine possessions, repulsing the Byzantines from Taormina in 902, and launching an attack into southern Italy, which was only cut short by the sudden death of their commander. Leo also pursued diplomatic goals in southern Italy, honouring the leaders of the Lombard principalities as his vassals; he also held out the possibility of a marriage alliance between the grand-

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<sup>70</sup> For Leo and Stylianos see Chapter Four. For Leo and Samonas, and his relationship with other eunuchs, see Chapter Eight.

<sup>71</sup> See Chapter Seven below.

<sup>72</sup> The *DAI* provides a wealth of such information, information that is totally blanked out by the chronicle.

son of Louis II Louis of Provence and his daughter Anna in 900.<sup>73</sup> However it was naval conflict that is the most striking feature of the conflict between the Arabs and the Byzantines during Leo's reign. The Arabs, headed by Leo the Tripolite and Damianos, encroached ever closer on the centre of Byzantine power, raiding their way up the western coast of Asia Minor and the shores of the Aegean. Samos was assaulted c. 891-893, then Demetrias in 901, Lemnos in 902/903, and ultimately Thessalonike in 904. These inroads were met by a Byzantine naval counter offensive headed by Himerios, whose most notable success was on St Thomas's day c. 906. Eventually Leo even launched a campaign against Crete to secure the Mediterranean for the Byzantines, but this seems to have suffered defeat, and Himerios had to flee for his life in 911. Thus foreign affairs tend to have a bleak air to them during Leo's reign, though it is necessary to inject some balance into the picture, and grasp the extent of the threat posed to Byzantium at this time.

To a large degree the history of Leo's reign is one that contains many parallels and maintains continuities with that of Basil; the nature of the problems did not change drastically. However differences can be identified too; the nature of Leo himself, the increased military problems (especially that of Bulgaria), and the desperate quest to secure the throne for a child of his own. Many of these issues failed to be settled conclusively, for Constantine's origins would come back to haunt him, and Symeon lived to fight another day. Yet these problems were not so much the emperor's fault but simply quirks of fate, and Leo was unlucky enough to be cut short before his time. He was a relatively young man when he died, and the fact that producing a son had proved so difficult compounded the problem; if Theophano had given birth to a son who had survived, the problems that ensued due to the existence of an heir who was a minor may have been prevented. Yet in the end Constantine VII did receive his inheritance and became a central figure in the history of the Macedonian dynasty, a dynasty which, despite its bloody origins and the obstacles in its path, was to be one of the most popular and longest-lived in Byzantium.

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<sup>73</sup> For Leo and Italy see Gay, *Italie méridionale*, I; Kreutz, *Before the Normans*, esp. 65-66; Vasiliev, *Byzance et les Arabes*, II, 1, 152-157. For the proposed marriage alliance see C. W. Previté-Orton, 'Charles Constantine of Vienne', *EHR*, 29 (1914), 703-706; W. Ohnsorge, 'Zur Frage der Töchter Kaiser Leons VI', *BZ*, 51 (1958), 78-81. On Louis of Provence, or Louis the Blind, see Riché, *The Carolingians*, esp. 224-226.

## CHAPTER TWO

### MACEDONIAN OR AMORIAN?

When the emperor Basil I died on 29 August 886 AD the continuation of the Macedonian dynasty was entrusted to his son Leo, together with Leo's brother Alexander in the position of co-emperor. Basil had established his dynasty at the expense of the Amorian house, the caesar Bardas being murdered in 866, and the emperor Michael III in 867. Basil had originally intended to pass on imperial power to his eldest son Constantine, but had had to turn to his second son Leo upon the death of the heir-apparent in 879. As every Byzantinist knows the accession of Leo as the Macedonian heir is heavy with irony, for it is said that he was not the son of Basil, but of the assassinated Michael, since Basil's wife Eudokia Ingerine had been Michael's mistress. Thus some Byzantinists have observed that in 886 the Amorian house regained the throne, and the Macedonian dynasty in reality died with Basil.<sup>1</sup> It has even been intimated that this taint of illegitimacy which affected Leo accounts for the hostile attitude Basil displayed towards him throughout his life.<sup>2</sup> The source of these beliefs is the inescapable comment of the chroniclers who follow the Logothete that Leo, who was born in the autumn of 866, was the son of Michael and Eudokia.<sup>3</sup> It is this statement that lies at the root of all debates over the parentage of Leo, debates which are concerned either to prove or refute the assertion.<sup>4</sup> However a recent discussion

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<sup>1</sup> See for instance P. Schreiner, 'Réflexions sur la famille impériale à Byzance (VIIIe-Xe siècles)', *Byz*, 61 (1991), 181-193, esp. 186. See also Vogt, *Basile*, 425.

<sup>2</sup> See for instance Runciman, *Romanus Lecapenus*, 40.

<sup>3</sup> For instance *GMC*, 835. The exact date of Leo's birth is not agreed upon by the chroniclers. Whilst they concur about the year the Continuator of George the Monk states that Leo was born on 1 September, Pseudo-Symeon just says September, and Leo Grammaticus gives 1 December. Adontz, 'Portée', 504, notes that Leo himself in a homily on the rededication of the church of St Thomas, which had burnt down at the start of his reign, indicates that his birthday lay some days before the feast of St Thomas (which was celebrated on 6 October), and thus argued that Leo was born around the end of September or the beginning of October. However Vogt, 'Jeunesse', 389-390, viewed such a conclusion as arbitrary, and maintained the dating of 1 September, pointing out that this is the date most strongly indicated by the chroniclers. Grumel, 'Notes de chronologie', 331-333, crucially observed that Leo actually says his birthday was on the dedication day itself, and as there is evidence that this was celebrated on 19 September concluded that Leo was born on 19 September 866.

<sup>4</sup> See Mango, 'Eudocia'; Kislinger, 'Eudokia'; Toul, 'Νοθογενείας'.

of the allegation by Karlin-Hayter takes a more interesting approach.<sup>5</sup> She considers the rumour itself, addressing such questions as who circulated it, when and why. She highlights the fact that it is only the anti-Macedonian chroniclers that give this item of information, believes that the rumour was current whilst Michael III still lived, and concludes that the story was intended to humiliate Basil. Karlin-Hayter also notes that even if one could prove that either Basil or Michael was Leo's father this would only be a biological fact. Ultimately it is irrelevant who his father was; what matters is how Basil and Michael treated Leo, and conversely how Leo treated them. The question of 'Basil or Michael?' is a sterile one; an examination of the relationship between Basil and Leo and their attitude towards one another will reveal far more about dynastic issues than any assertion about who was Leo's father.

In fact previous studies on the problem of Leo's parentage have not only been misguided but also inadequate. It has rarely been noted that the allegation of illegitimacy is raised not only against Leo, but also against all of Basil's sons bar Alexander. This last son was spared as Michael could not possibly have been his father for Alexander was born several years after Michael's death. The simple fact is that if a son was born to Basil that Michael could have fathered the chroniclers state that he had fathered it.<sup>6</sup> Byzantinists have been guilty of focusing the rumour too sharply upon Leo's head, for Basil's other sons Constantine and Stephen were also touched by it. Immediately then we are faced with the paradox that if Basil hated Leo because he suspected he was Michael's son, why then did he apparently love Constantine so much? This dilemma has been answered ingeniously by asserting that Constantine was not mothered by Eudokia, but by Basil's first wife Maria, whom Michael had forced him to separate from in order to marry Eudokia.<sup>7</sup> Therefore Basil loved Constantine because he was a genuine son, and Constantine can be cleared of the smear that has stuck to Leo. Yet can the argument that Constantine was a son of a previous marriage be maintained when no source exists stating that this was the case? As far as the chroniclers are concerned Constantine was a son of Michael. However evidence from elsewhere has been brought to bear on the issue. It is believed that Basil married Eudokia in 865, after Basil's promotion to the

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<sup>5</sup> P. Karlin-Hayter, 'L'enjeu d'une rumeur. Opinion et imaginaire à Byzance au IXe s.', *JÖB*, 41 (1991), 85-111.

<sup>6</sup> Although Stephen was born after the death of Michael it seems that Eudokia was pregnant with him at the time of Michael's murder: see Jenkins, 'Chronological Accuracy', 99.

<sup>7</sup> See Adontz, 'Portée', 509. For Basil's separation from Maria see *GMC*, 828.

office of *parakoimomenos*. If Constantine was born of this marriage, it has been argued, he could not possibly have been old enough to accompany Basil on his eastern campaign in 878, and thus he must rather have been a child of the first marriage.<sup>8</sup> One might take issue with this argument by questioning the date of Basil and Eudokia's marriage<sup>9</sup>, but there is a far more fundamental objection that can be raised. Was it really impossible that Constantine went on campaign at the age of thirteen or fourteen? It appears that it would be hasty to reject such an occurrence out of hand. Leo VI himself in his *Taktika* advocates the training of sons of officials and soldiers by taking them on campaign, referring to these sons as 'noble whelps', a description that is used of Constantine by the author of the *Life of Basil* when relating his participation in the campaign of 878.<sup>10</sup> Thus there is no reason to believe that Constantine could not have gone on campaign as a boy of pre-marriageable age, and further there is no reason to believe that he was not a son of Eudokia.<sup>11</sup> So the paradox remains that although Constantine and Leo could both be suspected of being sons of Michael Basil was apparently able to love Constantine but

<sup>8</sup> For the campaign see *VB*, 278. For its date see Haldon, *Three Treatises*, 268-269.

<sup>9</sup> The date of the marriage of Basil and Eudokia has been supplied by the regnal years of Pseudo-Symeon, which locates the union in the tenth year of Michael's reign. However both Jenkins, 'Chronological Accuracy', 91, n. 3, and Karlin-Hayter, 'Théophano', 17, have dismissed Pseudo-Symeon's indications of date as worthless. All that is known is that the marriage followed Basil's promotion to the office of *parakoimomenos*, which had become vacant on the fall of Damianos. Damianos had been an ally of Bardas but their relationship had soured when Damianos had refused to pay Bardas the honour due to him as caesar. E. Stein, 'Post-consulat et ΑΥΤΟΚΡΑΤΟΡΙΑ', *Mélanges Bidez, Annuaire de l'Institut de Philologie et d'Histoire Orientales*, 2 (1934), 869-912, esp. 899-900, n. 2, has shown that Bardas became caesar on 12 April 864, so it seems likely that Damianos must have refused to honour him shortly after this date. It could then be that Basil and Eudokia were thus married earlier than has been supposed. Further it should also be remembered that the sequence of events as recorded by the Logothete for the reign of Michael III is open to doubt; Jenkins, 'Chronological Accuracy', 95, has referred to its 'chronological incongruities'.

<sup>10</sup> *PG* 107, 1072-1073, 20. 214; *VB*, 278.

<sup>11</sup> As noted by Kislinger, 'Eudokia', 129, there is no indication that Constantine ever married. As most boys could expect to be married once they reached the age of fifteen it must be wondered if Constantine ever reached this age. This could indicate that he was born in 864 at the earliest. Adontz, 'Portée', 509, argued that Constantine must have been born around 855 given the proposed betrothal between him and the daughter of Louis II early in Basil's reign, but it seems more likely that this was a case of an engagement between children. Further, for what it is worth, pro-Macedonian authors do not even mention Maria's existence. The author of the *Life of Basil* (*VB*, 333 and 335) treats all Eudokia's children as Basil's, and Leo VI (Vogt and Hausherr, 'Oraison', 54. 9-11) goes so far as to say that Eudokia and Basil had not been married before their union with each other.

<sup>12</sup> Toynbee, *Constantine*, 595, sensibly remarks 'Parents do sometimes have differ-

hate Leo. A different criterion than parentage is required to explain Basil's attitude to Leo<sup>12</sup>, but more fundamentally than this the nature of their relationship needs to be reconsidered.

Prior to this examination it is necessary to address the theory, proposed by Mango, that Michael III himself considered Leo to be his son.<sup>13</sup> Mango envisages that when Eudokia Ingerine became pregnant in 866 Michael wanted to secure this child as his heir, for he had had no children by his wife Eudokia Dekapolitissa. Michael sought to make Leo an imperial child by forcing Basil and Eudokia to marry and then taking Basil as his co-emperor in May 866 (which had necessitated the assassination of Bardas in April 866), before the birth of the bastard child. Mango points out that the chroniclers record under the same entry as the birth of Leo the fact that Michael held chariot races at the palace of St Mamas, and he views these as celebrations to mark the birth of Michael's son. The advent of Leo then also explains why Michael and Basil fell out; Basil had become dispensable. Whilst imaginative and ingenious Mango's theory however is also flawed; the following problematic questions can be asked. Why would Michael go to such convoluted lengths to acquire an heir? Could he not have adopted Eudokia's child when it was born? How did Michael know that the child would be male? Is this theory sufficient to account for the murder of Bardas? Were the chariot races really to celebrate Leo's birth? With regard to this last question it can certainly be argued that the races took place long after the birth of Leo, for they witness Michael's threat to replace Basil, a threat that must have occurred not long before the murder of Michael.<sup>14</sup> A further impediment to Mango's interpretation of events is the above-argued point that Constantine was also a son of Eudokia, a fact the anti-Macedonian chroniclers take for granted. If it was the case that Constantine could also have been Michael's child why then would he attach so much importance to the birth of Leo? Thus there seems to be no existing evidence that Michael viewed Leo in a paternal light; what concerned him in 866-867 was his co-emperor, not the son of his co-emperor.<sup>15</sup> The question of what Leo thought of Michael is

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ent feelings towards sons who are each other's full brothers...A difference of character and temperament is as likely as a difference of mothers to account for Basil's partiality for Constantine and aversion from Leo'.

<sup>13</sup> Mango, 'Eudocia', 24.

<sup>14</sup> See Vogt, 'Jeunesse', 392.

<sup>15</sup> Witness the story of Michael's new favourite Basiliskianos: *GMC*, 835. The belief of some Byzantinists that Michael was in fact sterile should not be forgotten: Adontz, 'Portée', 510; Jenkins, *Imperial Centuries*, 198-199; Kislinger, 'Eudokia', 131.

<sup>16</sup> *VB*, 256.

another matter, and will be addressed in the consideration of the relationship between Basil and Leo that follows.

Basil I came to imperial dominance with the murder of Michael III at the palace of St Mamas in 867 on the night of 23 September. The Amorian house that had been established by Michael II in 820 was replaced by the Macedonian dynasty. The securing of this new dynasty lay in the effective rule of Basil and the nomination of his sons as imperial colleagues and heirs. The author of the *Life of Basil* was in no doubt about the strong dynastic base that Basil sought to establish, for he records that when Basil processed to Hagia Sophia on his accession he was followed by a chariot which transported Eudokia with her two sons Constantine and Leo.<sup>16</sup> The biographer also records the coronation of Constantine and Leo, an event by which Basil, he says, sought to forestall any revolts by establishing a strong dynasty.<sup>17</sup> It appears however that the writer has simplified and idealised the early history of Constantine and Leo; no other source relates the accession ceremony or the joint coronation, and as far as can be gathered Constantine was crowned in 868 and Leo probably in 870 at the feast of Epiphany.<sup>18</sup> But although the biographer may have distorted these details his point holds true; Basil did associate his two eldest sons in imperial power at an early stage and from an early age. Thus far no anti-Leo sentiment can be detected on the part of Basil.

This impression finds confirmation in the recording of a little met ceremony in Constantine VII's *Book of Ceremonies*.<sup>19</sup> The ceremony is entitled *All that must be observed at the koureuma of a child of the emperor*, and forms part of a sequence of ceremonies relating to the birth and baptism of imperial children. A general description of the ceremony is given, and then the specific case of Leo is recorded. The ceremony was centred on the oratory of St Theodore adjacent to the Chrysotriklinos, and here the patriarch would clip the child's hair and then present some of it to each of the sponsors (*anadochoi*) who were queuing up. This rite served to create ties of spiritual or artificial kinship between the imperial child and those who acted as *anadochoi*, which is

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<sup>17</sup> *VB*, 264.

<sup>18</sup> See Stein, 'Post-consulat', 898, n. 2; Vogt, 'Jeunesse', 401-402. Vogt, 'Jeunesse', 401, n. 1, observes that 'Il n'est pas absolument sûr que le couronnement de Léon ait eu lieu le 6 janvier. Il a pu l'être quelques jours auparavant, le jour de Noël. Une seule chose est certaine, d'après l'indiction fournie par les actes du Concile de 869-870, c'est que le couronnement de Léon eut lieu au début de la IIIe indiction'.

<sup>19</sup> *De Cer.*, 620-622.

the same term used of baptismal sponsors.<sup>20</sup> Vogt is one of the few Byzantinists who has commented upon this event of Leo's early life.<sup>21</sup> Initially he viewed it in a negative light, seeing it as an attempt by Basil to disqualify Leo from imperial power as he was not a son of his. Referring to what he describes as Leo's tonsure he states that 'L'Empereur [Basil] espérait, sans doute, empêcher par là cet importun de revendiquer jamais son droit à l'héritage paternel'.<sup>22</sup> However Vogt came to change his views on the import of this rite completely, apparently affected by the discovery of Leo's *Epitaphios* on his parents. No longer did he see the ceremony as an attempt to bar Leo from the throne, but as a public recognition by Basil that Leo was indeed his son.<sup>23</sup> It seems that Vogt was initially distracted by the idea that the hairclipping signified a tonsure with all its usual implications, and only later realised that the ceremony was about creating ties not only with the clergy but most importantly with those acting as the sponsors. In Leo's case those receiving his hair are identified as Leo Krateros the *strategos* of the Anatolikon theme, together with his theme officials, and also an unnamed *strategos* of the theme of Cappadocia with his staff.<sup>24</sup> Basil was thus endeavouring to create a bond between the personnel of two themes of the eastern frontier and the Macedonian dynasty<sup>25</sup>, and as such the ceremony should be seen in a positive light as Vogt realised, though there is no need to accept his view that Basil was making an explicit public statement about the parentage of Leo; rather it is implicit, suggesting that Basil treated him as a genuine son. What is less clear about the ceremony is its date. Vogt placed the event early in Leo's life, before the coronation of 870. Reiske was of the opinion that the hairclipping occurred on the eighth day after baptism, citing Goar's *Euchologion*.<sup>26</sup> The description of the ceremony indicates that Basil was sole emperor when the rite took place, so it certainly cannot have happened whilst Michael was still alive. Unfortunately no other examples are known from Byz-

<sup>20</sup> For baptismal sponsorship see R. Macrides, 'The Byzantine Godfather', *BMGS*, 11 (1987), 139-162.

<sup>21</sup> See also McCormick, *Eternal Victory*, 234; G. Dagron, 'Nés dans la pourpre', *TM*, 12 (1994), 105-142, esp. 121-122.

<sup>22</sup> Vogt, *Basile*, 59.

<sup>23</sup> Vogt, 'Jeunesse', 397-399.

<sup>24</sup> Vogt, 'Jeunesse', 398, thought that the text was corrupt and concluded that the Anatolikon *strategos* was simply Leo, whilst the Cappadocian *strategos* was Krateros. See also Dagron, 'Pourpre', 122 and n. 105. At the start of Leo's reign a Krateros is found as one of the judges in the trial of Photios: see *TC*, 355.

<sup>25</sup> See the comments of Dagron, 'Pourpre', 122.

<sup>26</sup> *Constantinus Porphyrogenitus*, II, *De Cerimoniis Aulae Byzantinae, Commentary*, I. I. Reiske, *CSHB* (Bonn, 1830), 731.

antine sources, though a similar event is recorded in the *Liber Pontificalis*.<sup>27</sup> It records that Constantine IV (668-685) sent locks of the hair of his sons Justinian and Heraclius to the newly appointed pope Benedict II and the clergy and army of Rome.<sup>28</sup> Since Benedict became pope in 684 it can be deduced that Justinian must have been about sixteen years old when his hair was sent to Rome.<sup>29</sup> As for Heraclius the date of his birth appears to be unknown. It cannot be said whether this incident was typical or not, but it indicates at least that it should not be automatically thought that the clipping of Leo's hair occurred when he was still a child. What can be concluded is that Leo was not being discriminated against, but was in fact being designated as a genuine imperial son whose welfare (and that of the dynasty) Basil was concerned for.

It appears then that Basil was content to recognise Leo as an imperial son and a member of the Macedonian dynasty, although it was clearly the eldest son Constantine that he regarded as the heir-apparent. Further confirmation of this view is supplied when the birth of Alexander in c. 870 is considered.<sup>30</sup> Although the chroniclers record that Alexander was the first genuine son of Basil this supposed fact seems to have had no effect on the emperor. He does not cast Constantine or Leo aside in favour of the new boy, but maintains them in their established positions. If Basil had any grounds to suspect that Constantine or Leo were sons of Michael he does not appear to have been bothered about it. Further it seems that Alexander was only crowned after the death of Constantine in 879, and this suggests that Basil had been content with his two co-emperors. Stephen, who was born and baptised in 867, also did not have an imperial role, but was destined for a career in the church.<sup>31</sup> Thus the

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<sup>27</sup> I am indebted to Ruth Macrides for this reference, and for her assistance in clarifying the meaning of this rarely-encountered rite. Did the rite have pagan origins? P. Chuvin, *A Chronicle of the Last Pagans*, tr. B. A. Archer (Cambridge, 1990), 43, discussing the Christians who suffered under Julian (361-363) mentions a certain Diodoros 'in charge of the construction of a church, who ordered that the long curls of little boys be cut so that later the family would be unable to consecrate them at the sacred festival marking the end of childhood'.

<sup>28</sup> *The Book of Pontiffs* (Liber Pontificalis), *Translated with an Introduction*, R. Davis, TTH (Liverpool, 1989), 79.

<sup>29</sup> Ostrogorsky, *State*, 129, indicates that Justinian II was born c. 669.

<sup>30</sup> GMC, 841. For the date of Alexander's birth see Jenkins, 'Chronological Accuracy', 97; Adontz, 'Portée', 506.

<sup>31</sup> For Stephen's baptism see GMC, 840. He was baptised in Hagia Sophia on Christmas day, and he journeyed back to the palace in a chariot drawn by white horses, the *praipositos* Baanes holding him whilst Basil distributed consular largesse. This ceremony clearly shows Basil glorifying in the birth and baptism of Stephen, so once again it appears that Basil was not publicly concerned about the rumoured parentage of his sons.

advent of a new male child did not upset the status quo, which was only altered with the death of the heir-apparent in 879.

The impression that family relations were settled and regular throughout the 870s seems to be have been fostered by Basil himself. It was probably in this period that he undertook the construction and decoration of the imperial apartment known as the Kainourgion, which has been documented in the *Life of Basil* in an extended section devoted to the emperor's building achievements.<sup>32</sup> In a chamber off the central space of the apartment a mosaic was put up celebrating the Macedonian dynasty. Basil and Eudokia were depicted enthroned, wearing their imperial regalia, and round the building were also represented the 'children they had in common'. Both the male and female children were included in the mosaic, 'adorned with imperial vestments and crowns'. A further mosaic depicted the entire family again, this time venerating the cross, the parents uttering a prayer of thanks for their children, and the children a prayer for their parents. The mosaics present a strong image of family unity and solidarity, an image of a righteous and God-appointed dynasty. They are undoubtedly propagandistic, but reveal exactly how Basil wished his family to be seen.<sup>33</sup>

In commenting upon these mosaics the author of the *Life of Basil* made much of the emperor's desire to educate his children, and it is well known that to this end he appointed as their tutor one of the most famous intellectuals of the day, Photios.<sup>34</sup> However it is often observed that this teaching post cannot have lasted long, for soon after his rehabilitation with the Macedonian court in the early 870s Photios became patriarch again, following the death of Ignatios in 877. Stephen probably had a longer tutelage with Photios than his brothers, for the old intellectual was entrusted with his clerical training, and Stephen was Photios's *synkellos* by the time of Basil's death.<sup>35</sup>

Further evidence of Basil's concern for his sons can be reflected in those relationships that he formed for them. Photios was not only the teacher of Basil's children, he was also a godfather to one of the sons.<sup>36</sup> The question of which son is open to debate; it could be either

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<sup>32</sup> *VB*, 331-335. This section has been translated by Mango, *Sources and Documents*, 196-198.

<sup>33</sup> Reality is a different matter. Whilst there is no indication that the origin of Basil's sons was a burning issue it is reported that Basil's daughters were confined to a monastery and Eudokia had an affair with the master of the augusta's table Niketas Xylinites: see *VB*, 280; *GMC*, 843.

<sup>34</sup> *VB*, 276-277.

<sup>35</sup> *GMC*, 848-849.

<sup>36</sup> See Macrides, 'Godfather', 158.

Constantine or Leo. This can be deduced from the fact that Photios alludes to the spiritual relationship in a letter during his first exile, at Skepi.<sup>37</sup> Since Basil quickly removed Photios from the patriarchate on his accession to power after the death of Michael it can be asserted that both Stephen and Alexander are ruled out as possible candidates. Perhaps Leo is a more likely candidate than Constantine for the former was the first child of Basil that could claim to be purpleborn<sup>38</sup> since Basil only acquired an imperial role in May 866, prior to Leo's birth in the autumn of the same year. It may be of significance that a relative of Photios, Nikolaos, was a spiritual brother of Leo. Leo and Nikolaos are also described as 'fellow students'.<sup>39</sup> It has been postulated that they were fellow students by virtue of the fact that they were both taught by Photios, and despite their age difference it seems clear that they were indeed taught at the same time, as Leo is made to assert in the *Life of Euthymios* that he knew Nikolaos's character well from their time as students together.<sup>40</sup> Presumably it was Basil as the father of Leo who had the power to form this tie of spiritual kinship, just as Danelis had united her son John with Basil at Patras.<sup>41</sup> Photios may also have exerted himself to bring about such a relationship, aware of the benefits of forging links with the Macedonian dynasty.

Another key relationship that was formed in Leo's youth was that with the monk Euthymios, with whom Leo had a love/hate relationship throughout his life. Euthymios had the role of Leo's spiritual father, which seems to mean that he acted as his religious mentor and his Christian conscience.<sup>42</sup> When Euthymios is first encountered in his *Life* he already has this function, and it clearly predated Leo's imprisonment in 883. After stints on Mount Olympos and a monas-

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<sup>37</sup> See *Photii Patriarchae Constantinopolitani Epistulae et Amphiloquia*, I, edd. B. Laourdas and L. G. Westerink (Leipzig, 1983), 133. 2-7; D. S. White, *Patriarch Photios of Constantinople* (Brookline, Massachusetts, 1981), 164.

<sup>38</sup> See the comments of Dagron, 'Pourpre', 114-115, and 114 n. 49.

<sup>39</sup> *VE*, 11. 30. R. J. H. Jenkins, 'A Note on the Patriarch Nicholas Mysticus', *Acta Antiqua Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae*, 2 (1963), 145-147, repr. *Studies on*, V, proposed that Nikolaos was in fact not a relative of Photios but a servant from Italy, but this theory has been contradicted by Karlin-Hayter, *VE*, *Commentary*, 163.

<sup>40</sup> Jenkins, 'Nicholas Mysticus', 145, states that Nikolaos was born in 852. Perhaps a teaching situation like that which Photios held at his house before becoming patriarch, where all levels of students met together, should be envisaged: see Lemerle, *Humanism*, 229-230.

<sup>41</sup> *VB*, 228. For spiritual kinship in general see E. Patlagean, 'Christianisation et parentés rituelles: le domaine de Byzance', *Annales ESC*, 33 (1978), 625-636, repr. *Structures, sociales, famille, chrétienté à Byzance IVe-XIe siècle* (London, 1981), XII.

<sup>42</sup> On spiritual fatherhood see H. J. M. Turner, *St Symeon the New Theologian and Spiritual Fatherhood* (Leiden, 1990), esp. 52-58.

tery near Nikomedeia facing the gulf of Astakenos Euthymios based himself at the monastery of St Theodore outside Constantinople.<sup>43</sup> It seems most likely that it was Basil who created the relationship between Leo and Euthymios, probably at some stage when Ignatios (whom Euthymios alludes to as his master<sup>44</sup>) was holding the office of the patriarch for the second time (867-877). Euthymios may indeed have been spiritual father to all Basil's children, for the *Life* indicates that Stephen looked upon Euthymios in the same way as Leo did.<sup>45</sup> Euthymios's relationship with Constantine and Alexander is less certain, though it should be noted that the monk argues Alexander's case against Leo after the emperor had separated his brother from his wife in 899/900.<sup>46</sup>

A further relationship that Basil is known to have created for Leo was that with the future archbishop of Caesarea, Arethas. Arethas himself describes his relationship with the emperor Leo as one that was not 'of recent growth or freshly planted in friendship's soil, but old-established, of his father's planting'.<sup>47</sup> It may be significant that Arethas's home town was Patras, a town that Basil supposedly visited and stayed in whilst he was in the service of Theophiltzes, and which was the location of his meeting with Danelis. Basil may have thought it appropriate that Leo and Arethas, both evidently well-educated, should become acquainted; perhaps a threesome was formed with Nikolaos, for he too became a friend of Arethas.<sup>48</sup>

Thus there seems to be significant testimony that throughout Leo's early life Basil was actively concerned for his spiritual, intellectual and political welfare. These are hardly the acts of a man viewing a child as a cuckoo in his nest; rather Basil treats Leo favourably. This impression is reinforced by the events that followed the sudden death of the heir-apparent Constantine in 879.

<sup>43</sup> See *ASM*, I, 84. 28—85. 1; Jugic, 'Homéliec mariales', I, 464-465.

<sup>44</sup> *VE*, 135. 33-34.

<sup>45</sup> *VE*, 23. 2.

<sup>46</sup> *VE*, 55. 20-26.

<sup>47</sup> See *ASM*, I, 14. 28-31; Karlin-Hayter, 'Historical Study', 300-301.

<sup>48</sup> See Jenkins and Laourdas, 'Eight Letters', 341. Another friendship that may have been fostered by Basil for his son was that with Matthew the *oikonomos* of the monastery at Pege, though this is only learnt from a fourteenth-century text relating the miracles connected with the churches of the Theotokos at Pege, which forms an appendix to the *Life of Euphrosyne the Younger* written by Nikephoros Kallistos: see *De sacris aedibus deque miraculis Deiparae ad Fontem*, AASS, Nov III, 883-884. A chapter of the account relates how Matthew was exiled to a monastery in Chrysopolis by Basil on the basis of some slander, but following visitations by the Theotokos in dreams to both the abbot of the monastery and Basil Matthew was restored. He became a friend of the emperor and those in the palace, and ended up as an intimate of Leo.

As far as Basil was concerned it was his son Constantine that was destined to succeed him as emperor after his death. Leo may have had a share in the imperial status, but it was Constantine who was to reign. If Constantine had succeeded his father it is likely that Leo would have remained as insubstantial a figure under Constantine as Alexander under Leo. It was Constantine whom Basil had taken on campaign to Syria<sup>49</sup>, and it was Constantine who had shared in the subsequent triumph in Constantinople in 878.<sup>50</sup> Thus when Constantine succumbed to a fever on 3 September 879 Basil's plans and expectations were shattered.<sup>51</sup> The chroniclers depict the death of Constantine as having a devastating effect upon Basil, and Jenkins subscribed to their interpretation, pushing it to the conclusion that Basil went mad.<sup>52</sup> The emperor is portrayed as giving in to his grief at the loss of Constantine, succumbing to the evil influences of those nearest to him, Photios and Theodore Santabarenos. Basil's excessive sorrow has been taken as confirmation of the belief that Constantine was the favourite of his sons, for only the death of such a favourite could have produced such a reaction. However both these stances should be reconsidered. Certainly Constantine is referred to in the sources as the beloved son of Basil, but then again Leo can also be described so, as in the acrostic of Basil's *First Parainesis*. Yet the sources do rightly stress that Constantine was Basil's first born son, and this may explain his grief better. His sheer shock at losing his eldest child is understandable, especially as this was a child that he had groomed, and confidently expected, to be his successor. Basil's actions upon Constantine's death do reveal that he had held this son in esteem (though it does not follow that he held his other children in less esteem). It was at this time that the mausoleum of Constantine the Great, which was attached to the church of the Holy Apostles, was revived as the burial site of the imperial family and became the tomb of the Macedonian dynasty.<sup>53</sup> Basil also honoured Constan-

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<sup>49</sup> *VB*, 278.

<sup>50</sup> See Haldon, *Three Treatises*, 140-147. Haldon translates here Constantine VII's *Record of the Victorious Return of the Christ-loving Emperor Basil from Campaign in the Regions of Tephrike and Germanikeia*.

<sup>51</sup> *VB*, 345; *GMC*, 844. For the date see F. Halkin, 'Trois dates historiques précisées grâce au Synaxaire', *Byz*, 24 (1954), 7-17, esp. 14-17.

<sup>52</sup> Jenkins, *Imperial Centuries*, 195-197. Naturally the pro-Macedonian sources do not subscribe to this view. *VB*, 345-346, says that Basil was able to control his grief manfully, inspired by the example of Job.

<sup>53</sup> P. Grierson, 'The Tombs and Obits of the Byzantine Emperors (337-1042)', With an additional note by Cyril Mango and Ihor Ševčenko, *DOP*, 16 (1962), 3-63. Constantine's mausoleum had last been used in 518 for the burial of Anastasios I.

tine's memory by creating him a saint with the co-operation of the patriarch Photios<sup>54</sup>, a detail that seems to be confirmed by the entry for Constantine the New recorded in the *Synaxarion*.<sup>55</sup> In the *Life of Ignatios* Basil is credited with building churches and monasteries dedicated to his son, and the chronicles record that one monastery was built upon the site where Theodore Santabarenos had conjured up a phantasm of Constantine for Basil.<sup>56</sup> It has also been argued that the period of mourning for Constantine lasted for six months, from 3 September 879 to 3 March 880.<sup>57</sup> It is noted too that the surviving coinage from Basil's reign does reveal a marked concentration on Constantine, and Grierson suggests that a certain coin might be a commemorative issue for Constantine and Eudokia.<sup>58</sup> Certainly the death of Constantine had an effect upon his father, as one would expect, but a major factor in Basil's distress was probably the destruction of his expectations. Jenkins's view that 'Basil went out of his mind, and continued during the next seven years to be subject to fits of derangement' is surely, at best, an overstatement; he is certainly far too easily led to the corollary belief that the 'disappointed father Basil, who had never cared for him [Leo], now developed a violent dislike of the bookish youth, and treated him with brutality and contempt'.<sup>59</sup>

Despite the setback of Constantine's death the Macedonian dynasty did not grind to a halt, and Leo became central to its survival; he was now heir-apparent.<sup>60</sup> Along with the promotion of Leo there are other signs that Basil had not lost sight of his dynastic objectives. It was on 1 May 880 that his greatest ecclesiastical construction was ceremoniously opened, the New Church.<sup>61</sup> Amongst the heavenly figures to whom this church was dedicated were included two of particular importance to the Macedonian dynasty, the archangel Gabriel and the prophet Elijah. It was the latter who had foretold the

<sup>54</sup> PG 105, 573.

<sup>55</sup> See P. Karlin-Hayter, 'Quel est l'empereur Constantin le nouveau commémoré dans le Synaxaire au 3 septembre?', *Byz*, 36 (1966), 624-626.

<sup>56</sup> PG 105, 573; *GMC*, 845-846.

<sup>57</sup> See Halkin, 'Trois dates', 16. However the dating of the sixth session of the Photian council to 3 March is not certain: see V. Grumel, 'La VI<sup>e</sup> session du concile photien de 879-880. A propos de la mémoire liturgique, le 3 septembre, de l'empereur Constantin le nouveau', *AB*, 85 (1967), 336-337.

<sup>58</sup> P. Grierson, *Byzantine Coins* (London, 1982), 179. C. Morrisson, *Catalogue des monnaies byzantines de la Bibliothèque Nationale* (Paris, 1970), II, 538-539, suggests however that the coin was issued for Constantine's coronation.

<sup>59</sup> Jenkins, *Imperial Centuries*, 195-197.

<sup>60</sup> Perhaps the hairclipping rite occurred at this juncture.

<sup>61</sup> See Magdalino, 'Nea'.

rise of Basil to imperial power and was thus held in especial honour by the dynasty.<sup>62</sup> Another artistic creation produced at this time reveals that the Macedonian dynasty and its ideology were still flourishing; this is the illustrated manuscript of the homilies of Gregory of Nazianzus.<sup>63</sup> Portraits of key members of the dynasty are included in the manuscript. In one image Basil, dressed in imperial regalia, is shown being handed the labarum by Elijah on his right and being crowned by Gabriel on his left. Another image shows the empress Eudokia flanked by two sons, Leo on her right (in the position of greater distinction) and Alexander on her left.<sup>64</sup> Thus these works of art testify to the continuation of the dynasty and its ideology in vigour.

It seems likely that to this period of Leo's emergence as heir-apparent can be dated the *First Parainesis*, in which he is purportedly addressed by Basil. Like its sixth-century model, the *Ekthesis* of Agapitos, the work is divided into distinct chapters, having sixty-six compared to Agapitos's seventy-two. The acrostic device used by Agapitos, whereby the initial letters of each chapter form a phrase, is also employed, spelling out the message *Basil Emperor of the Romans in Christ for his Beloved Son and co-emperor Leo*. The work treats Leo as the heir-apparent, and is concerned to instruct him how to be a good emperor, how he must act, what his priorities should be and ultimately how he will achieve the immortal empire after having presided over the mortal one. This is no practical handbook on how to rule the empire, but a highly moralistic, ideological and idealistic work, as would be expected of this genre of literature. The overriding theme of the work is that of mortality and immortality, in contrast to Agapitos's theme of philanthropy.<sup>65</sup> This text has obvious

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<sup>62</sup> *VB*, 222.

<sup>63</sup> See S. der Nersessian, 'The Illustrations of the Homilies of Gregory Nazianzus Paris GR. 510. A Study of the Connections between Text and Images', *DOP*, 16 (1962), 175-228. The manuscript is believed to have been a gift to Basil from Photios: see L. Brubaker, 'Politics, Patronage, and Art in Ninth-Century Byzantium: The Homilies of Gregory of Nazianzus in Paris (B. N. GR. 510)', *DOP*, 39 (1985), 1-13.

<sup>64</sup> For the imperial portraits see H. Omont, *Miniatures des plus anciens manuscrits grecs de la Bibliothèque Nationale* (Paris, 1929), Section III; I. Kalavrezou-Maxeiner, 'The Portraits of Basil I in Paris gr. 510 (With Two Plates)', *JOB*, 27 (1978), 19-24. See also H. Maguire, 'A Murderer Amongst the Angels: The Frontispiece Miniatures of Paris Gr. 510 and the Iconography of the Archangels in Byzantine Art', *The Sacred Image East and West*, ed. R. Ousterhout and L. Brubaker (Urbana and Chicago, 1995), 63-71.

<sup>65</sup> For the identification of the theme of philanthropy in Agapitos see Henry, 'Mirror', 300. Could the theme of Basil's work have been inspired by the recent death of Constantine?

significance for the consideration of Basil's attitude to Leo for it indicates that the emperor, whether he wrote it or not, seems to have been content to acknowledge publicly Leo as his beloved son and successor. Indeed Vogt, believing that Basil and Leo were not on good terms, was so confounded by this obvious indication that he was led to the conclusion that Leo had forged the *First Parainesis* himself.<sup>66</sup> He found it suspicious that the text indicates Leo as Basil's sole heir, expecting that Alexander should have been addressed also. In addition he pointed to parallels between the *First Parainesis* and Leo's *Epitaphios* on his parents, taking this as an indication that Leo was the author of both works. But Vogt was needlessly worried. Alexander is not alluded to as to all intents and purposes Leo was the heir, just as Constantine had been before. The similarities between the two texts need not be perturbing. Leo may have consciously decided to echo the *First Parainesis* when he came to write his *Epitaphios*. Further the two texts share similar themes anyway; the *First Parainesis* is a guide on how to be a good emperor and the *Epitaphios* is an account of how someone had been a good emperor.<sup>67</sup> It also needs to be recognised that it was perfectly possible for Leo to be addressed as 'beloved' even if this was not the case in reality; such an expression is surely inherent in the genre. Vogt's views are however a salutary reminder that accepted perceptions about the relationship between Leo and Basil have affected the reading of the evidence to a drastic degree.

Whilst Basil was thus preparing Leo mentally for his eventual succession he was also concerned with the physical necessities of the future emperor. The death of Constantine had made it clear to Basil that the survival of his children could not be taken for granted. The family needed to be extended through marriage; the birth of grandsons was required to secure the future of the dynasty. Thus at some date between the death of Constantine and at least nine months before Leo's imprisonment in the summer of 883, probably in 882<sup>68</sup>, the marriage of Leo to Theophano was arranged and accomplished.<sup>69</sup> Taken together with the *First Parainesis* this union confirms the impression that Basil was content to have Leo as his heir, and makes a mockery of the contention that Basil was merely biding his time until he could put Alexander on the throne.<sup>70</sup> There is absolutely no indi-

<sup>66</sup> Vogt, 'Jeunesse', 408-410.

<sup>67</sup> Note however that panegyric and parainesis are different beasts, as highlighted by M. Mullett, 'The Imperial Vocabulary of Alexios I Komnenos', *Alexios*, 359-397, esp. 379-384.

<sup>68</sup> For this date see Jenkins, 'Chronological Accuracy', 101.

<sup>69</sup> For details of this union see Chapter Six.

<sup>70</sup> Vogt, *Basile*, 61.

cation that Basil had any reservations concerning Leo's suitability as his destined successor. The marriage rather reveals that Basil had placed the future of the dynasty in Leo's hands. When the empress Eudokia died it was Leo's wife Theophano who stepped into her shoes and became the augusta<sup>71</sup>; all indications were that Leo would in like manner become augustus on Basil's death. Yet the marriage does mark a watershed in imperial relations, not because of Basil's hatred of Leo, but because of Leo's reaction to it; he was now a young man with a mind of his own.

Basil is commonly thought to have had a hostile attitude towards Leo, but rather it has been seen that the emperor treated his son in an ostensibly positive fashion. This situation deteriorates due to Leo's resentment of his father's authority; it is Leo's wilful personality that is the source of trouble.<sup>72</sup> The beginning of this dynastic strife was Leo's union with Theophano. In the *Life of Euthymios* Leo attests that he was forced to marry her against his will 'in dread of my father and in extreme distress'.<sup>73</sup> That Leo had no say in the choice of his bride is reflected also in the *Life of Theophano*, which reveals that it was the empress Eudokia who selected Theophano for her son, Basil simply confirming her choice.<sup>74</sup> As the father of the family Basil had the final say and the authority to enforce the decision. In acting thus the emperor was not behaving tyrannically but in the accepted paternal fashion; it seems that youthful Byzantine imperial bridegrooms were not expected to have a say in who their bride was to be.<sup>75</sup> It was Leo who was out of order in evidently resisting the decision that his parents had reached. The nub of the matter was that Leo was not content with Theophano. In this atmosphere she construed that her husband's friendship with Zoe Zaoutzaina (the daughter of one of Basil's officials, Stylianos Zaoutzes), a friendship that may have predated Leo's marriage to Theophano, was more than platonic. Theophano informed Basil of her suspicions. The emperor was enraged at this information, and without listening to Leo's explanation he grabbed him by the hair, threw him to the floor, and beat him until he streamed blood. Then Basil gave orders that Zoe was to be married

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<sup>71</sup> VI, 7. 7-10.

<sup>72</sup> See the comments of Kislinger, 'Eudokia', 131.

<sup>73</sup> VE, 41. 16-19.

<sup>74</sup> VI, 5-6.

<sup>75</sup> This lack of choice on the part of the bridegroom is certainly a fundamental characteristic of those unions that were said to have been the result of bridesshows: see W. T. Treadgold, 'The Bride-Shows of the Byzantine Emperors', *Byz*, 49 (1979), 395-413.

against her will to Theodore Gouzouniates.<sup>76</sup> When recounting these events to Euthymios Leo asserts that Zoe was innocent, thus indicating that there was no affair. The incident no doubt caused Leo to resent both his father and his wife, but Basil's violence against Leo can hardly be taken as a reflection of his general attitude towards him. Basil acted impulsively, in the manner of the physical man that he is so well attested as being. His actions must be understood as a reaction to the knowledge that Leo was bringing the dynasty into disrepute, undermining it. Basil had had enough scandal to last him a life time, and had no desire to see his son endanger his own position. Leo may indeed have not committed adultery, but the rumour that he had was cause enough for Basil's evident concern. Basil acted not out of hate for Leo but in a rage at the shame that was being brought upon the family, and may also have been spurred by Leo's apparent wilfulness in neglecting the wife that had been chosen for him. Significantly Basil however did not renounce Leo after this incident; he was still destined to be his successor. With Leo duly punished and Zoe Zaoutzaina safely married off Basil probably hoped that their relationship was ended and would never again prove to be a problem. Ironically however the emperor may have intensified the bond between them, for both Leo and Zoe now found themselves in undesired marriages.

It is clear then that in the matter of the relationship between Basil and Leo it is the latter who is the crucial factor in any antagonism, for it is Leo who rocks the dynastic boat. Basil was content to have Leo as his heir, and showed no apparent concern over the question of his parentage. Even after beating him Basil still maintained Leo as heir-apparent, though he could have replaced him with Alexander. Regarding Leo it is certain that he resented the choice of wife that had been made for him; the extant evidence for up to this point of his life allows for no deeper an analysis. There is no preparation for what happened next, the fact that Leo is suspected of being a would-be patricide. The nature of the evidence for this development merely clouds the issue. All the accounts have basically the same story to tell, and all are on Leo's side.<sup>77</sup> It is stated that Leo was concerned about the evil influence Theodore Santabarenos was wielding over his father, and did not conceal his revulsion for this satanic wizard. Theodore thus feared that Leo would turn Basil against him and so

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<sup>76</sup> For these events see *VE*, 39, 32—41, 8.

<sup>77</sup> *VB*, 348-349; *GMC*, 846-847; *Ps. Sym.*, 697-699; *VT*, 7-8; *Life of Constantine the Jew*, *AASS*, Nov IV, 648.

hatched a plot to discredit him. He advised the young emperor to secrete on his person a knife, so that he would have this ready to aid his father if he came under threat from wild animals or human enemies when riding out.<sup>78</sup> Leo duly followed the advice of the man that he so detested. Theodore then informed Basil that his son was plotting against him, and for proof of this all he had to do was ask for a knife the next time he was riding out. Thus the drama reached the conclusion that Theodore had aimed for; nobody seems to have stopped to contemplate that the fact that Leo produced the knife pointed rather to his innocence. Basil was convinced of Leo's guilt, stripped him of his imperial position, and then confined him in the palace apartment called the Pearl for the period of three years.<sup>79</sup>

Whatever is made of this story it is certain that Leo was suspected of plotting against his father, and he and his friends suffered for it.<sup>80</sup> Leo's *protovestiarios* Niketas Helladikos was beaten, whilst unspecified 'others' were punished and exiled. One key ally named in the plot is the domestic of the schools, Andrew. He was removed from his post while on campaign in the summer of 883. It is clear that the *magistros* Stephen also suffered at this time. Thus by 883 a distinct group of friends and allies had gathered around Leo, but whether they were guilty of plotting against Basil is another matter. However Leo himself in his oration on the feast of Elijah conveys not the anger of an innocent man at an unjust imprisonment, but the resignation of a guilty sinner, as Vogt has already pointed out.<sup>81</sup> Indeed Vogt dismissed the story of the plot as it is presented by the sources, and concluded that Leo had indeed planned to kill his father. If this is true, if Leo was not the victim of a frame-up (which should not be ruled out), the question 'Why?' arises. Was Leo aiming to restore the Amorian house? This theory however fails to convince (and will be addressed in detail below). It seems much more likely that Leo had come to resent his father and was impatient to become sole emperor. Basil's position as emperor may have become insecure so that Leo felt he had to act to secure the dynasty by becoming emperor himself.

<sup>78</sup> Pseudo-Symeon does vary from the other accounts here; he says that Theodore gave the knife to Leo for his own security against beasts. This version thus seems less incredible.

<sup>79</sup> For the length of the imprisonment see Jenkins, 'Chronological Accuracy', 101-102. *VT*, 8, 5, adds the information that his wife and daughter were also confined with Leo.

<sup>80</sup> The story of a plot seems also to have reached the Arabs, for *Tabari*, vol. 37, 145, records the death of Basil both in 883 and in 886: see Jenkins, 'Chronological Accuracy', 103.

<sup>81</sup> Vogt, 'Jeunesse', 428. See also Grosdidier de Matons, 'Trois études', 191.

The influence of Theodore Santabarenos and Photios over Basil, and their own ambitions, may indeed have been a source of alarm also. Ultimately the exact circumstances of Leo's fall in 883 are unknown.

However the fall did not witness the termination of Leo's imperial career under Basil, for on the feast of Elijah in 886 the emperor restored him to his former position. Basil was again set on having Leo as his heir, and there seem to have been a multitude of factors affecting his decision. The sources indicate that certain agents were exerting themselves on Leo's behalf. Divine forces were on Leo's side. The *Life of Theophano* reports that whilst Leo and Theophano were in captivity they were visited by a vision of St Demetrios, who was sent by God to reveal to them that they would be released and restored to their former honour.<sup>82</sup> A further messenger foretelling Leo's liberation was Constantine the Jew, who happened to be in Constantinople whilst Leo was in prison under threat of death.<sup>83</sup> A similarly divine explanation for Leo's release is provided by the *Life of Euthymios*, which suggests that the prayers and predictions of Leo's spiritual father had played a part in effecting his deliverance.<sup>84</sup> It may however seem preferable to seek the active agents of Leo's release. Pseudo-Symeon and the author of the *Life of Basil* relate much the same story as each other, pointing to senatorial pressure upon Basil to reach a final decision about Leo, either to find him guilty or innocent and take the appropriate action.<sup>85</sup> They allege that it was a certain palace parrot that spurred them on to this request by its constant lament for Leo. The chroniclers assert simply that it was Basil's faith in Elijah that led him to restore Leo on the feast day of the heavenly patron of the Macedonian dynasty.<sup>86</sup> The most extensive account of how Basil came to release his son is however provided by the *Life of Theophano*.<sup>87</sup> The key agent was Stylianos Zaoutzes, the commander of the emperor's bodyguard; the reported conversation between him and Basil reveals several factors influencing the decision to free Leo. It recounts that Stylianos only went to speak to Basil on the matter once Theodore was no longer in Constantinople. It is made apparent that Basil's reign was in crisis, for he had fallen ill and had not been seen in public, which caused discontent in the city amongst the senate and the people, who are represented as desiring the restoration of Leo. It

<sup>82</sup> *VT*, 10, 10—11. 5.

<sup>83</sup> *AASS*, Nov IV, 648.

<sup>84</sup> See *VE*, 7, 11-17; Karlin-Hayter, *VE*, *Introduction*, 48.

<sup>85</sup> *VB*, 350-351; *Ps. Sym.*, 698-699.

<sup>86</sup> *GMC*, 847. This version is also related by *Ps. Sym.*, 698.

<sup>87</sup> *VT*, 11, 6—14. 2. Karlin-Hayter, *VE*, *Introduction*, 48, opines that the account of Leo's restoration by the *Life of Theophano* 'inspires confidence'.

is also evident that Basil had become subject to plots, and ultimately he only releases Leo because he fears there would be an uprising if he did not do so. It is a natural reaction to have reservations about this account due to its evident favouritism towards Leo, but several of the factors it presents are confirmed elsewhere. Most significantly it is well known that in 886 a senatorial plot headed by John Kourkouas had been hatched against Basil.<sup>88</sup> Further Basil's biographer confirms that the emperor had become ill in 886.<sup>89</sup> It does look as if the ailing Basil was forced to restore Leo. The fact that he did not rely solely on Alexander suggests that the stories about Leo's popularity may contain some truth.<sup>90</sup>

Thus it was on 21 July 886 Leo was once again seen in public as emperor to be. The day of this display of reconciliation was obviously chosen carefully for it was one of great importance for the Macedonian dynasty, since it commemorated its patron Elijah. The implication is clear; the Macedonian dynasty had ridden a crisis and was now set to maintain the imperial rule that had been foretold by a divine agent. Unity was the message of the day, which Basil saw through despite his initial panic at the enthusiastic reaction of the crowd to the reappearance of Leo.<sup>91</sup> It seems, as Markopoulos has convincingly argued, that the *Second Parainesis* should be dated to the period of Leo's release.<sup>92</sup> This text is much shorter than the *First Parainesis*, has no acrostic and no separate chapters, but again it consists of ideological and moralistic observations. This time its theme seems to be how Leo can please God. It conveys the feeling that a crisis has been past, but that Leo must take care to behave in future. It is also a public statement that Basil wished Leo to succeed him as the head of the dynasty. Yet it is clear that Basil had only restored his son through necessity; the thought that Leo had contemplated killing

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<sup>88</sup> *GMC*, 847, which spells John's name as Krokoas, but Kourkouas seems to be the more accepted form. The plot was exposed on 25 March 886. John, who was domestic of the hikanatoi, had the support of sixty-six senators and officials, one of whom is identified as Michael the hetaireiarch. Since Stylianos was hetaireiarch when he approached Basil to plead Leo's cause it appears that he had replaced the fallen Michael.

<sup>89</sup> *VB*, 351.

<sup>90</sup> Karlin-Hayter, 'Rumeur', 102, ascribes this popularity of Leo to the belief that he was the son of Michael.

<sup>91</sup> *VT*, 13, 25-33; *GMC*, 847. At the sight of Leo the crowd cried out their thanks to God for his restoration. The chronicles add that Basil commented to the crowd 'You thank God for my son? You will have to suffer many afflictions at his hand and endure painful days', but this is undoubtedly apocryphal, written later with the knowledge of the events of Leo's reign.

<sup>92</sup> Markopoulos, '*Chapitres Parénétiqes*' (forthcoming).

him appears to have soured his view of his son. How their relationship would have fared in the future can only be surmised, for just over a month later Basil was dead.

The manner of Basil's death is agreed upon by most of the sources<sup>93</sup>, though they vary in their degrees of detail. The chroniclers recount that Basil died of wounds sustained through a hunting accident; he was lifted off his horse upon the antlers of a great stag.<sup>94</sup> The biographer of Basil agrees that the emperor became ill after a fall during a hunt, but does not refer to the role played by the stag.<sup>95</sup> The most detailed account is found in the *Life of Euthymios*.<sup>96</sup> It relates that the hunt was taking place in Thrace in the regions of Apameia and Melitias, and Basil abandoned his entourage in his pursuit of the leader of a herd of deer. The stag turned on Basil and carried him off on its antlers, where he was trapped by his belt. When Basil's horse was found riderless the hetaireiarch Stylianos and Prokopios the *protovestiaros* deduced what had happened and set off with the rest of the hunt to locate the emperor. The stag was eventually turned when the *hetaireia* blocked its path, and Basil was freed from his predicament when one of the bodyguards rode alongside the stag and cut through the belt with a sword. However Basil did not show gratitude to his saviour, but ordered him to be arrested and charged with attempted murder, and the chroniclers record that he had him executed. The stag itself was not apprehended.

This fantastic account of Basil's accident has given rise to doubts about its authenticity. Vogt described the story as 'parfaitement absurde', and believed it to be a cover up for the murder of Basil devised by Stylianos and Leo.<sup>97</sup> He also suggested that the bodyguard was executed by the plotters to prevent him from telling the truth. His theory finds support in the Arab evidence, for Tabari records that the sons of Basil murdered their father and placed one of themselves upon the throne.<sup>98</sup> Yet Vogt's version of events is flawed by the fact

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<sup>93</sup> *VT*, 14. 3-4, is the notable exception, for it states that Basil died of illness and old age, making no mention of a hunting accident. E. Patlagean, 'De la chasse et du souverain', *DOP*, 46 (1992), 257-263, suggests that to die on a hunt reflected badly on the emperor concerned. Perhaps this is why pro-Macedonian sources make little, if anything, of the event.

<sup>94</sup> *GMC*, 848.

<sup>95</sup> *VB*, 351-352.

<sup>96</sup> *VE*, 3. 1-5. 21.

<sup>97</sup> Vogt, 'Jeunesse', 426-428. Jenkins, *Imperial Centuries*, 197, agreed with Vogt's theory, describing the story of the accident as 'incredible, because physically impossible'.

<sup>98</sup> *Tabari*, vol. 37, 153.

that Basil was not killed during the hunt, but died nine days later from his wounds. As Karlin-Hayter has so rightly observed, what is the point of a murder plot that leaves the victim alive.<sup>99</sup> It might also be wondered if the plotters would invent such a fantastic story if they wanted to conceal their hand in the incident. It would seem then that the account of Basil's accident is an elaboration upon the truth, and on this occasion Leo is beyond any suspicion of attempted patricide. On Monday 29 August 886 Leo suddenly found himself ruler of the Byzantine empire.

It is only after the death of Basil that Leo's attitude to his father and the Macedonian dynasty can be assessed more clearly, for only now could he pursue policies of his own. Whilst Basil had been alive Leo had had to follow his lead, and all that can be detected on his part was that he resented having to marry Theophano, unless one also believes that he had indeed intended to kill his father in 883. Almost immediately it appears that Leo shows his true colours, for the first act of his reign as recorded by the chroniclers is the reburial of Michael III with imperial honours.<sup>100</sup> Leo despatched the *stratelates* Andrew to Chrysopolis with an accompaniment of senators and clerics to fetch and escort back to Constantinople the body of the assassinated emperor, whose corpse had been entombed in the monastery of Philippikos.<sup>101</sup> The body was exhumed and laid in a casket of cypress wood, decorated honourably and royally, and brought back to the city across the sea. Leo and his brothers Alexander and Stephen then joined the funeral procession, and Michael was hymned to his grave in the mausoleum of Constantine the Great.<sup>102</sup>

This act of Leo has been interpreted by Mango as a public admission that his real father was Michael, and thus ultimately as a denial of his Macedonian heritage.<sup>103</sup> Mango also seems to see significance in the fact that Leo appointed Niketas Xylinites, the man who was supposed to have had an affair with Eudokia Ingerine during Basil's reign and who had been punished with a tonsure, as the *oikonomos* of

<sup>99</sup> Karlin-Hayter, *VE, Commentary*, 149.

<sup>100</sup> *GMC*, 849.

<sup>101</sup> The identity of the monastery is provided by the eleventh-century chronicler Skylitzes: see *Ioannis Scylitzae Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. H. Thurn, *CFHB* 5 (Berlin, 1973), 172. 81.

<sup>102</sup> Michael's body was interred in a sarcophagus of Thessalian marble that had formerly held the bodies of Justin I (518-527) and his wife Euphemia, which Leo had appropriated from the monastery of the augusta: see Grierson, 'Tombs', 44-46. Regarding the date of Michael's reburial it may be conjectured that it occurred on the anniversary of his death, 23-24 September.

<sup>103</sup> Mango, 'Eudocia', 26.

Hagia Sophia.<sup>104</sup> Why should Leo have treated the enemies of his father in this honourable fashion, unless he was indeed anti-Macedonian? Further indications on the part of Leo that he was the son of Michael have been adduced by Magdalino.<sup>105</sup> He points out that Leo enhanced the importance of the palace church of the Pharos, which Michael III had built, by including it in his prescription for the ceremony for the feast of Elijah. He further notes that Leo may have transferred the celebration of imperial weddings to the Pharos from the chapel of St Stephen, and that he issued a nomisma portraying the Virgin of the Pharos on the obverse. Magdalino observed also that there is reason to think that under Leo Michael replaced Gabriel as the principal angelic patron of the Nea.<sup>106</sup> All these points thus indicate that when Leo came to power it was his concern to link himself openly with the Amorian Michael, and so distance himself from the supplanting dynasty. In Mango's interpretation of Leo's pro-Michael policy the conclusion is reached that the emperor eventually had to retreat from this stance, and reassert his links with Basil, and this is why he composed his *Epitaphios* on his parents in 888, which subscribes totally to the Macedonian myth, more familiar from the account of the *Life of Basil*. However the evidence of the pro-Michael policy and the *Epitaphios* can be seen in an alternative light.

The reburial of Michael is central to reading Leo's policy towards the Amorian emperor, and Mango's interpretation is not the only one. Dvornik stated that it was 'impossible to explain the first act of his [Leo's] government...except as a display of the young sovereign's petulance'<sup>107</sup>, an interpretation Kislinger is not far from when he suggests that Leo reburied Michael as he sympathised with the Amorian's forced marriage and also sought revenge on his hated father.<sup>108</sup> A more positive interpretation has been proposed by several Byzantinists, who argue that Leo was not attempting to reject his Macedonian roots but in fact to improve the reputation of his dynasty which had come to power in such a bloody fashion.<sup>109</sup> By confronting the spectre of Michael and laying it to rest with honour Leo was seeking to atone for the crime of his dynasty and rid it of this ghastly shadow which cast such shame on the Macedonians. A comparable

<sup>104</sup> Mango, 'Eudocia', 24-25; *GMC*, 843.

<sup>105</sup> Magdalino, 'Elijah', 196.

<sup>106</sup> Magdalino, 'Nea', 56, n. 26

<sup>107</sup> Dvornik, *Photian Schism*, 245.

<sup>108</sup> Kislinger, 'Eudokia', 136.

<sup>109</sup> Adontz, 'Portée', 510; Toynbee, *Constantine*, 596; Karlin-Hayter, *VE, Commentary*, 158.

action can be seen at the start of the reign of Theophilos (829-842) when he punished the murderers of Leo V (813-820), a murder by which his father Michael had come to power.<sup>110</sup> The death of Basil I in 886 marked the demise of the last of those who were involved in the plot to kill Michael, so now was the time for Michael's memory to be safely restored for the benefit of the Macedonian dynasty. It is indeed entirely possible that the reburial of Michael had been requested by the dying Basil who may have feared for his immortal soul.<sup>111</sup> Quite simply the death of Michael was on the conscience of the Macedonians and Leo finally expurgated their sin. It seems that some Byzantinists have been led astray by the chroniclers, even though they themselves offer no explanation of the reburial. However they do record the burial as the emperor's first act, whereas that undoubtedly was the burial of Basil.<sup>112</sup> Of course this funeral was not a newsworthy event as it was not out of the ordinary.

The conclusion that Leo was more concerned about the position of the Macedonian dynasty than the memory of Michael necessitates an explanation of the other indicators of Leo's supposed pro-Michael policy. The appointment of Niketas Xylinites to the office of *oikonomos* of Hagia Sophia can in fact be seen as a typical Leonine act (and perhaps a typical Byzantine one). Throughout Leo's reign the number of people who fell from grace but were then later restored is high; in this light the appointment of Niketas is not unusual.<sup>113</sup> He had suffered for his alleged offence under Basil and now it was safe for Leo to avail himself of his talents again.

Leo's evident preference for the Theotokos of the Pharos and her church can be interpreted not as a sign that he was endeavouring to show his allegiance to Michael but rather as a sign of his devotion to the Theotokos<sup>114</sup>; it also reveals on the part of the emperor a practical

<sup>110</sup> *GMC*, 791.

<sup>111</sup> Both the author of the *Life of Basil the Younger* and Liudprand assert that Basil was troubled by the memory of Michael's death: see *PG* 109, 653-656; *Werke*, 9, 1-20.

<sup>112</sup> In connection with Michael's reburial it is interesting to note that Leo showed no similar veneration for Michael's sister Maria, whose sarcophagus he stripped of its silver plate: see *GMC*, 794.

<sup>113</sup> Compare also Basil's treatment of Neatokometes: *GMC*, 842. Neatokometes was the alleged lover of Thekla, and when Basil was informed of this affair he had the man beaten and tonsured and made a monk. However later Basil appointed him *oikonomos* of Hagia Sophia.

<sup>114</sup> For Leo's attachment to the Virgin see Schminck, 'Rota', 231; Antonopoulou, *Homilies* (forthcoming). A further indication of the emperor's devotion to Mary can be found in a poem written c. 912 on the death of Leo: see I. Ševčenko, 'Poems on the Deaths of Leo VI and Constantine VII in the Madrid Manuscript of Scylitzes', *DOP*, 23-24 (1969-70), 185-228, esp. 198, 26-27.

awareness that the Pharos church was a topographically convenient site for the various ceremonies that he created or altered.<sup>115</sup> It cannot be said for certain that Basil had avoided the location of the Pharos anyway, for the prescription for the ceremony marking the dedication day of the Nea also includes the Pharos.<sup>116</sup>

The issue of the replacement of Gabriel by Michael remains. Magdalino does point out that only one source records that the Nea was originally dedicated to Gabriel<sup>117</sup>, whilst all the others name Michael, but the evidence of the image of Gabriel crowning Basil in the illustrated manuscript of the homilies of Gregory of Nazianzus that was produced c. 880 indicates strongly that Gabriel was the original object of Basil's devotion. The reason Magdalino gives for Basil's preference for Gabriel is that the archangel Michael was too evocative of Michael III.<sup>118</sup> Yet for Leo there was no longer any need to shy away from the memory of the assassinated Amorian and so the angel Michael supersedes Gabriel. Michael seems to have been a much more common figure of devotion than Gabriel anyway; perhaps the eclipse of Gabriel was a natural process. Thus it can be questioned that this issue throws light on Leo's attitude to his parentage.

Having proposed that Leo was not deliberately expressing himself to be an Amorian rather than a Macedonian Mango's view that the *Epitaphios* of 888 was his attempt to return to the Macedonian fold has to be considered. Mango argued that Leo 'had gone too far in dissociating himself from his predecessor, in suggesting to all and sundry that he was not Basil's son' and thus he had to redress the balance for the 'interests of state and dynasty to be safe-guarded'.<sup>119</sup> This belief

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<sup>115</sup> The Pharos church was adjacent to the Chrysotriklinos, which Michael III had redecored, and which was the focal point of imperial ceremony since it was a gathering place for the emperor, senate and clergy. The Macedonian palace complex that Basil had begun with his Nea and Tzykanisterion was added to by Leo with his bath and the church and monastery of St Lazaros, and the Pharos was very much an integral part of this complex.

<sup>116</sup> See Oikonomidès, *Listes*, 215. 1-8; *De Cer.*, 118-121. Further it is by no means certain that Leo was solely responsible for introducing the new elements in the ceremony for the feast of Elijah, as Basil is also credited with altering it: see Magdalino, 'Elijah', 193.

<sup>117</sup> *VB*, 325. Note however that it also says that it was dedicated to Michael: *VB*, 319.

<sup>118</sup> However Karlin-Hayter, 'Rumeur', 104-105, n. 45, notes that Basil did build or restore churches of the archangel Michael, so the argument that he was avoiding the name of Michael begins to look weak. Perhaps Basil was attracted to the figure of Gabriel since he was the messenger of good news, the good news in Basil's case being the rule of the Macedonians.

<sup>119</sup> Mango, 'Eudocia', 26.

led Mango to characterise the *Epitaphios* as 'a string of lies and half-truths', though this observation could be made of any panegyric; it is the nature of the genre rather than Leo's insincerity that accounts for the character of the oration. It is equally misguided to interpret the panegyric as a confirmation that Leo was Basil's son<sup>120</sup>, for this is the position that Leo had to take when writing the speech. Karlin-Hayter has seen the oration in a less dogmatic light, suggesting that it represents 'a stocktaking corresponding quite possibly to the end of the period of purges' which marked the start of Leo's reign.<sup>121</sup> However more recently she has expressed the view that Leo was trying to counteract the rumours that he was Michael's son, rumours that Leo's actions (especially the reburial of Michael) may indeed have encouraged.<sup>122</sup> Yet surely it is possible that Leo's panegyric had no other motive than simply to praise his parents and honour the dynasty. Why is there this mania to extract so much historical significance from the *Epitaphios*? It was certainly not the first oration that Leo had ever given where he presented himself as Basil's son; he had taken this stance in his speech marking the elevation of his brother Stephen to the patriarchate at Christmas 886.<sup>123</sup> Philotheos records a mass of Macedonian ceremonies that were observed during Leo's reign. The inauguration of the Nea was commemorated every year on 1 May; on 20 July the feast of Elijah was observed, and the celebrations continued for several days thanks to Leo; on 15-16 August the *synaxis* of St Diomedes was observed by the imperial court, which involved a visit to the monastic complex of St Diomedes that was linked with the story of Basil's rise to prominence; on 29 August the memory of the dynasty-founder was commemorated, and the following day marked the *autokratoria* of Leo and Alexander.<sup>124</sup> Granted, Philotheos's list of feasts was only compiled in 899, but there is no reason to think that any of these feasts had lapsed or were not established at the start of Leo's reign. Leo appears to have been asserting his Macedonian roots from the day he inherited the throne in 886; there was no point where he suddenly had to backpedal furiously. Thus there is no reason to believe that the *Epitaphios* of 888 has the special significance of Leo asserting his Macedonian parentage.

<sup>120</sup> For this view see Vogt and Hausherr, 'Oraison', 10-12; Adontz, 'Portée', 508.

<sup>121</sup> Karlin-Hayter, *VE, Commentary*, 166.

<sup>122</sup> Karlin-Hayter, 'Rumeur', 105.

<sup>123</sup> Grosdidier de Matons, 'Trois études', 200-207.

<sup>124</sup> Oikonomidès, *Listes*, 215. 1-8, 215. 17-219. 11, 221. 5-9, 221. 10-19, and 221. 20-223. 7.

In conclusion it appears that upon his father's death Leo did not seek to upset the dynastic achievements of Basil, but rather tried to improve the integrity of the dynasty's right to rule by the honourable reburial of Michael. This act may in fact have symbolised the fusion of the Amorian and Macedonian houses that had already been proceeding apace. The strong ties that linked these two dynasties together should not be ignored.<sup>125</sup> Basil's wife Eudokia Ingerine was of Amorian blood, as was Leo's own bride Theophano, who was related to Eudokia.<sup>126</sup> Basil himself had been adopted by Michael in 866.<sup>127</sup> It is clear that several prominent members of Basil's court had Amorian connections, including Photios, Leo Katakalon and Stephen the *magistros*. To these familiar examples can be added that of Marianos the nephew of Bardas and Theodora, who was eparch of Constantinople under Basil.<sup>128</sup> Basil may even have become a substitute Michael for the surviving Amorians, given his dealings with Thekla<sup>129</sup>, his visit to the dying Theodora<sup>130</sup>, and his friendship with Photios. Leo's burial of Michael III in the mausoleum of Constantine the Great, which had become the tomb of the Macedonians, was perhaps a tacit recognition of the fact that Michael was indeed an integral part of the dynasty. Thus rather than concentrating on the opposition of Amorian to Macedonian, of Michael versus Basil, the essential unity of the two houses should be sought out. Further, it can be asserted that the relationship between Basil and Leo did not turn on any question of parentage, for to all intents and purposes Leo was Basil's son. The real cause of conflict between the two men lay in Leo's own ambitions.

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<sup>125</sup> Herlong, *Social Mobility*, 217, is of the opinion that the Isaurians, Amorians and Macedonians can be seen as 'a single, diffuse dynasty, so strong were the ties of blood and marriage among them'.

<sup>126</sup> See Chapter Six below.

<sup>127</sup> *VB*, 132.

<sup>128</sup> *GMC*, 839.

<sup>129</sup> *GMC*, 842.

<sup>130</sup> See P. Karlin-Hayter, 'La mort de Theodora', *JÖB*, 40 (1991), 205-208.

## CHAPTER THREE

### THE END OF PHOTIOS

The reburial of Michael III was certainly one of Leo VI's first major acts as emperor; another was the deposition and confinement of the patriarch Photios. However unlike the rehabilitation of Michael's memory the action taken against Photios has not excited a significant amount of attention. This chapter aims to amend this failing, considering why Leo terminated the famous patriarch's career and assessing the details and the implications of his fate. Such issues are crucial to an understanding of the ambitions and attitudes of the emperor.

Photios is one of the most famous figures of ninth-century Byzantium, perhaps even of the span of the entire history of the Byzantine empire. He has earned his fame due to his part in ecclesiastical conflicts<sup>1</sup>, and also for his intellect and literary works.<sup>2</sup> Apart from the inadequate examination of his fate under Leo VI his life and career have received detailed attention. He was born into a notable family probably around 810; his uncle Tarasios had been patriarch from 784-806, under both Eirene (780-802) and Nikephoros I (802-811).<sup>3</sup> During the period of Second Iconoclasm (815-843), when the veneration of the images of holy people was once again banned, his family suffered persecution since they were iconophiles, his father perhaps being the iconophile confessor Sergios.<sup>4</sup> After the death of the last iconoclast emperor Theophilos in 842 his wife and son, Theodora and Michael III, presided over the restoration of icons, and at this time Sergios's family could return to favour. Thus Photios came to prominence in the imperial bureaucracy, attaining the position of *protasekretis*.<sup>5</sup> His ecclesiastical career only took off, albeit spectac-

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<sup>1</sup> Dvornik, *Photian Schism*.

<sup>2</sup> Lemerle, *Humanism*, esp. 205-235; W. T. Treadgold, 'The Macedonian Renaissance', *Renaissances before the Renaissance. Cultural Revivals of Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, ed. W. Treadgold (Stanford, 1984), 75-98.

<sup>3</sup> H. Ahrweiler, 'Sur la carrière de Photius avant son patriarcat', *BZ*, 58 (1965), 348-363.

<sup>4</sup> F. Dvornik, 'The Patriarch Photius and Iconoclasm', *DOP*, 7 (1953), 67-97; C. Mango, 'The Liquidation of Iconoclasm and the Patriarch Photios', *Iconoclasm*, edd. A. Bryer and J. Herrin (Birmingham, 1977), 133-140.

<sup>5</sup> For this post and its duties see Oikonomidès, *Listes*, 310-311; Bury, *Administrative System*, 97-98.

larly, after Bardas and Michael III had put an end to the administration of the regent Theodora and the logothete of the drome Theoktistos in 856. In 858 Bardas found himself opposed by the then patriarch Ignatios, who refused to admit him into Hagia Sophia since it was believed that he was having an affair with his widowed daughter-in-law.<sup>6</sup> In response Bardas and Michael engineered Ignatios's deposition and confinement on the charge of treason, thus leaving the patriarchal throne empty. They then availed themselves of this opportunity to fill it with a kinsman of theirs, Photios himself.<sup>7</sup> On 20 December 858 Photios was tonsured, and on the four following days he was successively ordained lector, sub-deacon, deacon and priest. On Christmas day he was consecrated as patriarch of Constantinople. The deposition of Ignatios and the sudden although preceded promotion of Photios did cause scandal and ecclesiastical division on an oecumenical scale, for Rome took up the cause of Ignatios. The division was finally ended during the reign of Leo VI, though at the council of 879-880 in Constantinople Photios was recognised as the legitimate patriarch, even by the papal delegates.

It seems likely that Photios owed his promotion more to the influential Bardas than to the emperor Michael. Indeed Michael is said to have quipped outrageously 'Theophilos [one of Michael's disreputable companions] is my patriarch, Photios is that of the caesar, and Ignatios that of the Christians'.<sup>8</sup> It is notable that both Bardas and Photios did share an evident enthusiasm for education. Whilst still a layman Photios presided over a private school that was based in his house, and Bardas is famed for the establishment of the school at the Magnaura, which was headed by Leo the Mathematician who held the chair of philosophy.<sup>9</sup> The partnership has certainly been noted and idealised by Byzantinists<sup>10</sup>, which leads to the conclusion that the murder of the caesar in 866 left the patriarch in a less certain situa-

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<sup>6</sup> See Dvornik, 'Patriarch Ignatius and Caesar Bardas'. Kislinger, 'Eudokia', 124-126, proposes that the daughter-in-law was in fact Eudokia Ingerinc.

<sup>7</sup> The exact nature of the relationship is confused. *TC*, 175, indicates that Photios was the son of Eirene, a sister-in-law of Kalomaria, who was a sister of the empress Theodora. However Skylitzes, *Scylitzae*, 98, states that Photios was a brother-in-law of Eirene, a sister of the empress Theodora. Bury, *Eastern Roman Empire*, 156, n. 1, argued that the former version was correct, and that it had been misunderstood by Skylitzes and by modern historians. Mango, 'Liquidation', 137-138, has also commented on this problem. He concludes that whatever interpretation is placed on the sources two facts are undeniable, 'that Photios's mother was called Eirene and that she was related by marriage to the imperial family'.

<sup>8</sup> See the *Life of Ignatios*, PG 105, 528.

<sup>9</sup> Lemerle, *Humanism*, 228-230, 183-185.

<sup>10</sup> For instance Jenkins, *Imperial Centuries*, 160-161.

tion. Yet Photios did maintain his position under Michael III and his partner Basil, and only fell from grace in 867 when he denounced the murder of the emperor his kinsman.

After deposing Photios Basil filled the vacant patriarchate with the previously ousted Ignatios, and Photios was condemned by the council of 869-870. However it seems that not long after his condemnation Photios had reingratiated himself with the new emperor, and became tutor to Basil's children within the palace. From surviving letters of Photios written during his exile at the Skepi monastery it appears that the ex-patriarch brought pressure to bear on the emperor to restore him. One letter refers to the ties that already bound them together, and reveals that both Photios and Basil had endeavoured to solicit each other's favour even before the death of Michael. Another letter also makes it clear that Basil still respected and needed Photios's intellect, for the court consulted him on passages from the Old Testament *Book of Kings*.<sup>11</sup> Other less objective explanations of Photios's rehabilitation circulated within Byzantium itself, and are recorded in two virulently anti-Photian works, the *Life of Ignatios* and the chronicle of Pseudo-Symeon. They take pleasure in reporting that Photios availed himself of trickery and magic to regain Basil's favour. The biographer of Photios's old rival Ignatios tells how Photios forged a document relating to the genealogy and rule of Basil's family, and had it placed in the imperial library where a friend of his was librarian. This friend then showed the document to the emperor, and asserted that only Photios would be able to understand it; thus Photios was consulted and found favour with Basil by interpreting the artifact in such a way as to delight the emperor.<sup>12</sup> Whilst this story may seek to cast Photios in a scheming light it does reveal the reality of Basil's dependence on Photios for literary and ideological matters; it was Photios's forged document that gave Basil's dynasty eminent roots by connecting it with Tiridates the king of Armenia. The story related by Pseudo-Symeon is perhaps less revealing, alleging that Photios availed himself of the magical skills of Theodore Santabarenos to win Basil over; Theodore advised him to have magic water sprinkled on the emperor's bed by a chamberlain, and that this would bring about the emperor's favour.<sup>13</sup> The truth may however be more mundane. As well as valuing Photios's mind it is possible that Basil simply wished to end the ecclesiastical division that centred on

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<sup>11</sup> *Photii Patriarchae Constantinopolitani Epistulae et Amphilochia*, II, ed. B. Laourdas and L. G. Westerink (Leipzig, 1984), 163-167.

<sup>12</sup> *PG* 105, 565-568.

<sup>13</sup> *Ps. Sym.*, 694.

Ignatios and Photios by recalling Photios (who seems to have been popular and had a significant amount of support within Byzantine society<sup>14</sup>) and reconciling the two rivals. Following Photios's recall the patriarch and ex-patriarch did meet and publicly expressed their reunification by exchanging the kiss of peace. When Ignatios died on 23 October 877 it was as a matter of course that his old opponent replaced him on the patriarchal throne three days later.

From this point on it seems that Basil no longer simply depended on the restored patriarch, but was in fact dominated by him. Every comments that 'From 877 to 886 the power of Photios in church and state was at its height. Basil, despite his early enmity, leaned upon him more and more even in political matters'.<sup>15</sup> More recently Markopoulos, arguing that Photios is the author of a surviving poem of praise on the emperor Basil, has stressed how important Photios was to Basil as a creator of the emperor's ideology. He asserts that 'we can claim that the attribution of the poem to Photios is based not only on a philological examination of vocabulary and phraseology, but also on a consideration of the ideological world of the period of Basil, which laid the foundations for the ideology of the Macedonian dynasty. In this world it is Photios who shapes the policies which are to be followed'.<sup>16</sup> In addition to the poem Photios wrote hymns for Basil; he probably commissioned the illustrated manuscript of the homilies of Gregory of Nazianzus; and he has also been nominated as the real author of Basil's *First Parainesis* for Leo. In the wider sphere it was Photios that had control of the synod of 879-880, and it was Photios that obliged Basil by recognising the emperor's dead son Constantine as a holy figure. It seems however that Photios wanted to exceed the role of the mentor of the Macedonian dynasty; not surprisingly being the mouthpiece of an infamously uneducated emperor was not enough for a man of such evident ambition. It is well known that the law book named the *Eisagoge* that was produced in the name of Basil, Leo and Alexander which asserts the authority of the patriarch over that of the emperor has been ascribed to Photios himself.<sup>17</sup> In this climate it is easy to believe that Leo the heir to the throne,

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<sup>14</sup> Dvornik, *Photian Schism*, 162; Vlyssidou, 'Εξωτερική πολιτική και έσωτερικές αντιδράσεις, 113-121.

<sup>15</sup> G. Every, *The Byzantine Patriarchate 457-1204* (London, 1947), 125.

<sup>16</sup> A. Markopoulos, 'An Anonymous Laudatory Poem in Honor of Basil I', *DOP*, 46 (1992), 225-232, esp. 228-229. This begs the question, who was creating Basil's ideology at the beginning of his reign?

<sup>17</sup> For the *Eisagoge* and Photios's dominance of Basil see Schminck, *Rechtsbüchern*, 1-15, and 'Rota', 211-227. See also Van der Wal and Lokin, *Sources du droit*, 79-81.

being rather more intellectually independent than his father, could have become alarmed at the power that the patriarch was wielding over Basil; perhaps Leo saw that his own future was endangered. The chronicles certainly assert that Leo objected to the influence that his father was coming under in the form of Theodore Santabarenos, an intimate of Photios.

Like Photios Theodore was a protégé of Bardas, though for what reason or by what connection is not clear. Originating from Santabaris in Phrygia Theodore was placed by Bardas in the Studite monastery when he was a youth, with the apparent intention of converting him from Manichaeism to orthodoxy. However our source, the anti-Photian chronicler Pseudo-Symeon, is quick to besmirch Theodore's reputation by alleging that he never did reject his former belief entirely.<sup>18</sup> Eventually Theodore became the abbot of this monastery for the period 864-865, during the first patriarchate of Photios.<sup>19</sup> When Photios fell in 867 on the accession of Basil Theodore also suffered expulsion from his monastery, though he had already been replaced as abbot by Sabas, a pupil of Photios.<sup>20</sup> Thus even at the beginning of Basil's reign the fates of Photios and Theodore Santabarenos were entwined. Given the fact that they both had a patron in Bardas it seems likely that they would have been acquainted with each other through him, although the chronicles record that it was Leo Salibaras who introduced them.<sup>21</sup> Perhaps their friendship only grew after Salibaras had performed the introduction; would Theodore really have been replaced by Sabas if Photios and Theodore had already become firm friends? The role that Theodore was said to have played in helping Photios regain Basil's favour was noted above, and it seems that by way of thanks when he regained the patriarchate in 877 Photios appointed Theodore as bishop of Euchaita, though as a partisan of Photios he would presumably have found his reward anyway. It was also at this time that Photios introduced Theodore to Basil, and the emperor was apparently greatly taken with the bishop and monk who reputedly possessed the power of magic and prevision; it was alleged that following the death of Basil's son Constantine in 879 Theodore's powers enabled him to conjure up a phantasm of the dead youth for the

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<sup>18</sup> *Ps. Sym.*, 693.

<sup>19</sup> See the *Life of Nikolaos the Studite*, PG 105, 863-926, esp. 912; *Ps. Sym.*, 693. For the date see G. da Costa-Louillet, 'Saints de Constantinople aux VIIIe, IXe et Xe siècles', *Byz.* 25-27 (1955-57), 738-852, esp. 807.

<sup>20</sup> PG 105, 912.

<sup>21</sup> *GMC*, 845.

grief-stricken father. It was against this carefully crafted backdrop that Leo suffered the revenge of Theodore when the young emperor voiced loud concern about the company his father was keeping and the effect it was having upon him, for the incident of the knife and Leo's fall soon followed.

As remarked in Chapter Two the story of the circumstances of Leo's fall are not convincing. Theodore has been painted in the darkest colours, whilst Leo has received a thorough whitewash. It is easy to conclude that the story of the knife was later concocted in an attempt to clear Leo of the slur that he had plotted to kill his father; Theodore has simply become the scapegoat for the guilty emperor. Yet Leo is not the only figure to be exonerated from sin by the incredible tale; the patriarch Photios is notable by his absence. Photios's only recorded involvement in the episode of Leo's disgrace is in fact as the defender of the fallen son, for he dissuaded Basil from carrying out his wish to blind Leo.<sup>22</sup> However in the account of Leo's deposition of Photios and the subsequent trial it is clear that the patriarch was also accused of being behind Leo's removal from power, and it is Photios's conviction that Leo is most keen to secure. The story of the knife may be a cover up, but it is surely as much concerned with protecting Photios as it is Leo.

It is undeniable that when Leo became emperor in 886 he did take action against Photios. The chroniclers report that he despatched Andrew the domestic of the schools (the same man who had been charged with bringing back Michael's body from Chrysopolis) together with John Hagiopolites the logothete of the drome to Hagia Sophia, where they ascended into the pulpit, announced the charges against the patriarch in the hearing of all, and then led Photios away; he was subsequently exiled to the monastery of the Armenianoï, also known as the monastery of Bordon.<sup>23</sup> The *Life of Euthymios* also reports the incident alleging that it was Stylianos Zaoutzes who was responsible for Photios's deposition, 'ignominiously banishing him and demanding his resignation', adding that 'it [the resignation] was had by force and he was banished from town and ordered to settle in the Hieria, as they are called, *incommunicado*'.<sup>24</sup> The detail that Leo

<sup>22</sup> *GMC*, 846.

<sup>23</sup> *GMC*, 849. The chroniclers do not agree on the name of the monastery; *LG*, 263, agrees with *GMC* calling it that of the Armenianoï, but *TC*, 353-354, names it as the monastery of Harmonianoï, whilst *Ps. Sym.*, 700, that of the Armeniakoi, adding that it was also called the monastery of Gordon. Karlin-Hayter, *VE*, *Introduction*, 57, n. 1, favours the identity provided by Pseudo-Symeon.

<sup>24</sup> *VE*, 11. 19-23. Thus the monastery where Photios was confined must have been located in the Hieria, supposing that both the *VE* and the chroniclers are accurate.

extracted a resignation from Photios is confirmed by letters to and from pope Stephen (885-891).<sup>25</sup>

Unfortunately the chroniclers do not state what the charges levelled against Photios were. Photios was evidently brought to trial in 887 on charges of treason<sup>26</sup>, but these may not have been levelled against him in 886; it is only after recounting the details of Photios's deposition that the chroniclers report that Leo was informed by his right-hand men, Andrew and Stephen the *magistros*, of the plot that Photios and Theodore had hatched against him in order to acquire the throne for a relative of the patriarch.<sup>27</sup> The chroniclers may even hint that Andrew and Stephen invented the story out of spite, for it is noted that they had often been slandered to the emperor Basil by Theodore. Despite these reservations it may be that the charges against Photios in 886 had already consisted of accusations of treason but Leo only felt confident enough to bring the matter to a trial after having heard the testimony of Andrew and Stephen. Alternatively the chroniclers may simply have delayed relating how Leo had been informed by Andrew and Stephen as it made a suitable introduction to the trial of 887; the episode of the informing may thus be a 'cast back', in Jenkins's terminology.<sup>28</sup>

The details of the trial itself are related by the chroniclers, and once again their concern to protect Photios is detectable; it is only Pseudo-Symeon who pursues his own distinctive anti-Photian line. Theodore Santabarenos had to be summoned to Constantinople for the trial, for he had returned to Euchaita in 886 prior to Basil's restoration of Leo. Both suspects were then held at the palace of Pege, where they were guarded separately. This measure prevented them from colluding before the trial, but more importantly it seems that Photios was not meant to know that Theodore was also being held by the imperial authorities, so that his appearance at the trial would throw the ex-patriarch off his guard. It is also clear from the dialogue of the trial recorded by the chroniclers that Leo and his aides hoped that Theodore would betray Photios to them by implicating him in the plot. Leo himself did not preside when the trial was convened but entrusted the examination to faithful officials, namely Stephen the *magistros*, Andrew the domestic of the schools, the patri-

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<sup>25</sup> For the letter of Stylianos Mapas of Neo-Caesarea to the pope see J. D. Mansi, *Sacrorum Conciliorum Nova et Amplissima Collectio* (Venice, 1771), XVI, 425-436, esp. 432. For the pope's letter see Mansi, *Sacrorum Conciliorum*, XVI, 435-438, esp. 436.

<sup>26</sup> For dating the trial to 887 see Jenkins, 'Chronological Accuracy', 106.

<sup>27</sup> *GMC*, 850.

<sup>28</sup> Jenkins, 'Chronological Accuracy', 92-93.

cians Krateros<sup>29</sup> and Goumer, and finally John Hagiopolites. As noted the majority of the chroniclers present Photios in a favourable light in their account of the trial; they still refer to him as the patriarch, and he is depicted as an honourable and dignified figure.

According to the chroniclers, at the start of the examination Photios is led out and seated with honour by the panel of inquirers, who then seat themselves. Andrew leads the inquiry, and initially establishes that Photios knew Theodore, whom he only recognises under the description of monk and archbishop of Euchaita, not as abbot. Having established this point Theodore is then brought out before the panel, and he is interrogated by Andrew. Through Andrew a question from the emperor is posed: Where are the monies and things of my empire? This indicates that Leo believed that Theodore had taken advantage of Basil's attachment to him and had acquired monies and valuable objects that rightly belonged to the emperor. Theodore responds that they are wherever the emperor of the day (meaning Basil) gave them, and now that Leo seeks them he has the power to recover them from there. Andrew persists, and gets to the heart of the matter, asking Theodore whom he planned to make emperor when he advised Basil to blind Leo, a relative of his or of Photios. Theodore acts the innocent at this question, and Stephen then takes up the role of interrogator, asking Theodore if he was indeed innocent why then did he disclose to Leo that he would convict Photios of the charge. Confronted by this brutal assertion of his betrayal of Photios Theodore fell at the ex-patriarch's feet denying the accusation. If the inquisitors hoped that Photios would break down and confess his guilt at the revelation of Theodore's supposed treachery they were sadly mistaken; he maintained his dignity and reassured Theodore of his faith in him. Andrew's subsequent fury may convey his frustration in the face of the realisation that without Theodore's testimony Photios would not be convicted, and that the emperor would be displeased. Thus according to the majority of the chroniclers the trial did not achieve its purpose of securing the conviction of Photios, and Leo was indeed furious at finding no 'reasonable charge' against him. The emperor vented his rage on the doubly

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<sup>29</sup> The chroniclers are evidently in some confusion about whether Andrew and Krateros are separate people or one and the same, that is Andrew Krateros. *TC*, 355, indicates that they are separate individuals, whilst *GMC*, 850, indicates a single person. Vogt, 'Jeunesse', 398, n. 2, preferred the latter version, but the view that they are two separate people is more convincing; it seems significant that although Andrew has already been mentioned several times in the chronicles he has never before been given the name of Krateros.

treacherous Theodore, having him beaten and banished to Athens where he was subsequently blinded.<sup>30</sup> As for Photios the majority of the chroniclers add nothing more; one is left with the abiding impression that Leo was frustrated and that the ex-patriarch was not convicted of treason.

However as indicated one chronicle has a rather different vision of events, that of Pseudo-Symeon.<sup>31</sup> This chronicler is in no doubt as to why Photios was expelled from the patriarchate and confined in a monastery; it was because his treachery had been discovered. The trial itself is covered in less detail but is entirely damning of both Theodore and Photios. It is simply stated that Andrew and Stephen brought an action against the treacherous pair for slandering Leo to Basil, and the senate duly condemned them. Theodore was beaten and exiled to Athens, whilst Photios was returned to the monastery of Gordon, where he died. Not for Pseudo-Symeon the honourable portrait of Photios, nor the unsuccessful trial. Indeed he is the only chronicler who bothers to record Photios's eventual death within the context of Leo's reign, no doubt with a great deal of satisfaction.

Such are the details as related by the chroniclers, but what is one to make of Leo's attitude to Photios? Primarily, why did the emperor depose him at the start of his reign? One could accept the chroniclers at face value and believe that Photios was punished for his part in Leo's fall in 883, but given the nature of the evidence reservations are inevitable. Dvornik, who views Photios in a sympathetic light, sought to explain the patriarch's second deposition in 886 in terms of Moderates and Extremists, and indeed applied his theory of two opposing 'politico-religious' parties to further problems within Byzantine history. He believes that these two hostile clans competed for supreme control over church and state, and describes their nature thus:

the Extremists were generally to be found among the monks, chiefly the reformed monks of the monastery of Stoudion, and their spiritual clients, the devout, the traditionalists and the ultra-conservatives, elements which in virtue of the norms that will prevail as long as there exists rich and poor, must necessarily preponderate among the leisured and bourgeois classes. The Moderates...belonged to classes more in touch with the humdrum of daily life and were for this reason more inclined to compromise. They also numbered many well-wishers among the secular clergy, who

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<sup>30</sup> This episode is also commented upon by *VE*, 9. 6-14. It records that Leo had intended to move Theodore from the prison of St Dalmatos and confine him in the Studite monastery. However the abbot of the monastery, Anatolios, protested to the emperor via Leo's spiritual father Euthymios, and thus Theodore ended up in Athens instead.

<sup>31</sup> *Ps. Sym.*, 700-701.

were in closer contact with the world than cloistered monks, and among higher clergy, who were conscious of heavier responsibilities. Intellectual circles were all the more in sympathy with the latter tendency as the Extremists persisted in their obstinate prejudices against all profane knowledge.<sup>32</sup>

Applying the theory Dvornik views Photios's first deposition in 867 as a symptom of Basil's conciliatory policy towards Rome, the necessity of having to look for support amongst the opponents of Michael III, the extremists. The fact that Photios reputedly came out in opposition to Basil over the murder of Michael seems to carry no weight with Dvornik, who favours the view that Photios simply resigned. Basil's subsequent restoration of Photios in this scheme thus becomes a sign that the emperor had decided he preferred the support of the moderates, that it was of more use to him. Leo's plot against Basil that was exposed in 883 is also explained within this framework. Dvornik stresses that relations between Basil and Leo were bad, and he argues that this led the young emperor to plot to remove his hated father. Seeking support for his treachery he naturally turned to Basil's opponents, now consisting of the extremists. It was as leader of the moderates that Theodore Santabarenos revealed Leo's plot to Basil, though one does wonder why Photios himself was not Dvornik's chief moderate. Further, not only did Leo hatch an extremist plot, but that of John Kourkouas is also presented in this light. When Leo came to power in 886 Dvornik asserts that the fall of Theodore and Photios is explicable by the fact that they were the inevitable victims of the extremists whom Leo had courted. The accusation against Photios and Theodore that they had plotted against Leo is thus lightly dismissed, and Dvornik says it was a typical charge, for Bardas and Michael had used it against Ignatios in 858.

For Dvornik everything is reduced to 'the old antagonism between the two politico-religious parties—the Extremists and the Moderates—that had striven for control over the political and religious affairs of the Empire'. Dvornik's views were taken on board by White, who comments that 'Leo VI underwent the same change of mind that Basil I did, who courted extremists at the beginning of his reign but later returned to the moderates'.<sup>33</sup> Yet this theory should surely be challenged; enforcing such a formulaic analysis upon Byzantine history alone should alert one's historical sensibilities. To explain everything at the level of two opposing groups is short-sighted. It is certainly easy to challenge Dvornik's analysis, for it fails to deal ad-

<sup>32</sup> Dvornik, *Photian Schism*, 9.

<sup>33</sup> White, *Photios*, 36-37.

equately with the evidence that Photios did hatch a plot against Basil's family; and it is much more likely that Photios fell in 867 since he came out in opposition to the supplanting dynasty. Far from turning back to the moderates Basil tried to unite all those in conflict by reconciling Ignatios and Photios in the 870s, and this policy of unification culminated in the synod of 879-880, though a splinter group did remain unreconciled. Dvornik is on very shaky ground when he asserts that Leo turned to the extremist faction for support against his father, for the evidence to confirm this is lacking. The few figures known to be suspected of being involved in Leo's plot can hardly be called extremists; Andrew, Stephen and Niketas Helladikos were all men who were very much in touch with the realities of everyday life. After Leo came to power in 886 he did try to reconcile the splinter group that refused to acknowledge Photios as patriarch, but there is no evidence that he was involved with this group before he became sole emperor. Further Leo was only concerned about healing ecclesiastical division, he was not taking up the stance of an extremist. This is patently clear when it is seen whom Leo appointed to the patriarchate to replace Photios; his candidate was his own brother Stephen, a classic moderate if ever there was one.<sup>34</sup> In fact the elevation of Stephen to the patriarchate by Leo was as distasteful to the splinter group as Photios remaining in office, for Stephen had been trained by Photios. Thus Leo put his own interests before those of the so-called extremists. Quite simply Dvornik's analysis is fundamentally inadequate; there is no one theory to explain every facet of Byzantine history. The straitjacket of his perception allows for no variation, for no truth. Political motives are constantly underplayed in the quest to view everything as a case of moderate versus extremist, and such a formulaic interpretation of history must be rejected. Ultimately Dvornik and White are blinded by their sympathetic attitude towards Photios, and this makes them reject any question of his involvement in a plot out of hand, without sufficient consideration of the evidence.

Indeed Karlin-Hayter has already gone some way to discrediting Dvornik's concept of politico-religious parties.<sup>35</sup> She particularly asserts that party views did not rule people's actions; it was a matter of

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<sup>34</sup> The same could be said of Arethas. Here is a man who qualifies as a moderate as defined by Dvornik, yet he emerges as the leader of the opposition to Leo's fourth marriage.

<sup>35</sup> P. Karlin-Hayter, 'Le synode à Constantinople de 886 à 912 et le rôle de Nicolas le Mystique dans l'affaire de la tétragamie', *JÖB*, 19 (1970), 59-101, repr. *Studies in*, XVI.

individual choice.<sup>36</sup> For her Photios's fall cannot be explained as a product of 'the strife of the parties in Byzantium'.<sup>37</sup> Ostrogorsky too rejected Dvornik's explanation for the banishment of 'the powerful and self-willed Photius', and saw the main reason for this measure as Leo's desire to 'secure for himself unlimited control over ecclesiastical affairs'.<sup>38</sup> There is undoubted truth in this view, for it is clear that Photios had aimed to be a greater power than the emperor himself, and Schminck certainly perceives Photios's fall as the result of Leo's own forthright concept of his role as emperor.<sup>39</sup> However this cannot be the whole story, for Leo had already secured the resignation of Photios and the promotion of Stephen before the ex-patriarch was brought to trial; why then was the trial necessary if the emperor had only been concerned with achieving ecclesiastical supremacy? For Karlin-Hayter the answer is simple. What the chronicles relate is true; Photios was implicated in treason.<sup>40</sup> This interpretation of events finds support in a recent study on foreign policy and internal responses during the reign of Basil I.<sup>41</sup> Vlyssidou argues that Basil and Photios were in truth opposed over what the priorities of the empire should be in the sphere of foreign policy. It is well attested that Basil was preoccupied with the desire to reassert the Byzantine presence in the west, but Photios was discontent about the ramifications of this policy. This conflict of interest had the consequence of setting Photios against the wishes of Basil, and he aimed to covertly thwart Basil's western ambitions. Within this scenario Leo's fall in 883 is explained as the result of the young emperor trying to protect his father from the scheming patriarch. Thus Vlyssidou believes the chronicles when they assert that Leo was the victim of a plot.<sup>42</sup> She also explains the plot of Kourkouas in this light, arguing that Photios was involved in it. So for Vlyssidou the fall of Photios would be explicable as the revenge of Leo, who had been framed by the patriarch and his allies. This interpretation is lent significant weight from evidence only preserved in the *Life of Euthymios*. Here it is revealed that it was not only the patriarch and Theodore who suffered at the hands of Leo; retali-

<sup>36</sup> Karlin-Hayter, 'Synode', 90-93; 101.

<sup>37</sup> Karlin-Hayter, *VE, Introduction*, 57.

<sup>38</sup> Ostrogorsky, *State*, 241, n. 1.

<sup>39</sup> Schminck, 'Rota', 227-228. Markopoulos, 'Chapitres Parénétiques' (forthcoming), argues that there is an allusion in the *Second Paränesis* to the intellectual rivalry between Leo and Photios.

<sup>40</sup> Karlin-Hayter, *VE, Introduction*, 57.

<sup>41</sup> Vlyssidou, 'Εξωτερική πολιτική και έσωτερικές αντίδράσεις.

<sup>42</sup> The story of the plot of Photios and Theodore is also referred to by Stylianos of Neo-Caesarea: see Vogt, *Basile*, 157, n. 4; Mansi, *Sacrorum Conciliorum*, XVI, 433.

ation was taken against the wider group of Photios's family and friends.<sup>43</sup> It is clear that there was a purge marking the beginning of Leo's reign. Unfortunately the author of the *Life of Euthymios* is coy about naming names, and beyond Theodore and Photios he only adds that of Leo Katakalon, presumably as this detail has a bearing on Euthymios's life for the emperor intended to build a monastery for his spiritual father at Psamathia on the confiscated land of Katakalon.<sup>44</sup> Katakalon is described as the former *drungarios* and a relative (συγγενής) of Photios, and his punishment consisted of deprivation of property, tonsuring and exile. As ever with the *Life of Euthymios* it is Stylianos Zaoutzes who is credited with such harsh measures, and the author comments that 'he [Stylianos] did the same by others whom I willingly pass over', adding that 'in this way he dealt not with him [Photios] alone but with all his relations, depriving them of their property and tonsuring them'. Despite the attempts of the author to have us believe that Photios and his relatives fell merely through the malign action of Stylianos it is clear that the purge was a genuine and intentional political act of Leo's early reign. This was no indiscriminate attack on the patriarch's family, as the *Life* itself lets slip when it mentions an incident concerning Nikolaos, a relative of the patriarch and the spiritual brother and fellow student of Leo. Nikolaos had taken fright when he saw his relatives being punished by the new emperor, and had fled to the monastery of St Tryphon in Chalcedon to take refuge there as a monk. But when Leo heard of this he brought Nikolaos back to court and made him his *mystikos*.<sup>45</sup> It is also made clear that relatives of Leo Katakalon were still at large after his fall, for they were able to agitate for his recall.<sup>46</sup> It thus emerges that those who were targeted for punishment were considered to be genuine political opponents.

Regarding Katakalon the reason for his fall may be illuminated by the *Life of Ignatios*. This reveals that Leo Katakalon had been *drungarios* of the watch, and was *gambros* to the patriarch Photios (probably meaning that he was his brother-in-law).<sup>47</sup> The hagiographer has a very low opinion of Katakalon, for like his kinsman Photios he was seen as an enemy of Ignatios and his sympathisers. Leo is described as

<sup>43</sup> *VE*, 11, 14-25.

<sup>44</sup> For the story of the building of the monastery see *VE*, ch. 5.

<sup>45</sup> On the position of the *mystikos* see P. Magdalino, 'The Not-So-Secret Functions of the *Mystikos*', *REB*, 42 (1984), 229-240; R. Guiland, 'Études sur l'histoire administrative de l'empire byzantin. Le mystique, ὁ μυστικός', *REB*, 26 (1968), 279-296; Oikonomidès, *Listes*, 324.

<sup>46</sup> *VE*, 29, 26-31. 2.

<sup>47</sup> *PG* 105, 569.

'the most cruel and harsh of all men', and he is likened to the fourth-century emperor Licinius who reputedly persecuted Christians.<sup>48</sup> His crime was his treatment of those who opposed communion with Photios after 26 October 877. It is interesting to note that Leo Katakalon was *drugarios* of the watch, an office which entailed the ensuring of the security of the palace and the emperor<sup>49</sup>; Katakalon may thus have had some part in the exposing of Leo's 'plot' and his subsequent punishment. Further, if there was a plot hatched against Basil by Photios and his friends and relatives the *drugarios* of the watch would have had a crucial role to play in this, as can be seen from cases during Leo's own reign.<sup>50</sup> It seems then that the evidence of the *Life of Euthymios* is of vital importance in illuminating the action that was taken against Photios and Theodore in 886-887, which is only related in isolation by the chroniclers and in such a manner as to raise doubts about the veracity of the account. At the start of Leo's reign then there was a wide purge against those who were perceived to be guilty of treason.

One major consequence of the deposition of Photios was of course that a new patriarch had to be appointed. It appears to have become common for the *synkellos*, the official of the emperor who liaised with the patriarch, to step into the patriarch's shoes after his death.<sup>51</sup> When Photios came to be deposed in 886 the position of *synkellos* was in fact held by the emperor's own brother Stephen, and he duly became patriarch. It is Basil I who was responsible for Stephen having attained the office of *synkellos* by 886, for he took the decision to enter this son upon an ecclesiastical career.<sup>52</sup> Presumably Basil had the intention ultimately to make Stephen his patriarch. The ramifications of such a strategy are plain; the emperor whose son was patriarch effectively had total control of church and state, and thus would have little or no need to fear patriarchal opposition during his reign. The benefits of the scheme were certainly appreciated by Romanos I Lekapenos (920-944), for he made his son Theophylakt *synkellos* at Christmas 924, and then patriarch in 933.<sup>53</sup>

<sup>48</sup> PG 105, 569

<sup>49</sup> For this office and its functions see Oikonomidès, *Listes*, 331; Bury, *Administrative System*, 60-62.

<sup>50</sup> Both John and Podaron who held the office of *drugarios* of the watch were implicated in plots against Leo VI: see GMC, 865 and 869.

<sup>51</sup> See Oikonomidès, *Listes*, 308; Bury, *Administrative System*, 116-117.

<sup>52</sup> Leo touches on Stephen's dedication to the church by Basil in two of his works, his *Epitaphios*, and his homily on Stephen's accession to the patriarchate: see Vogt and Hausherr, 'Oraison', 64. 5-24; Grosdidier de Matons, 'Trois études', 205. 23-24.

<sup>53</sup> See Runciman, *Romanus Lekapenos*, 67; 75-77.

Leo however faced an obstacle in appointing his brother as patriarch, for Stephen was too young to hold the position. Canon law stated that the minimum age for becoming patriarch was twenty-five, and Stephen by December 886 had only reached the age of nineteen.<sup>54</sup> Despite this hindrance Leo forged ahead, enforcing his will. Stephen was installed as patriarch in December 886, probably on Christmas eve.<sup>55</sup> The ceremony was performed in Hagia Sophia, Stephen being ordained by Theodore the archbishop of Caesarea, in the presence of the other archbishops.<sup>56</sup> The brief and basic entry in the chronicles conveys no controversy concerning Stephen's installation, but there exists other evidence relating to the event that does indicate that the ecclesiastical body did have its reservations about the promotion of Stephen. This evidence comes from the pen of Leo VI himself, for his address on the occasion of Stephen's installation has been preserved.<sup>57</sup> Grosdidier de Matons comments that the unique historic interest of the discourse on the consecration of Stephen 'est l'indice...d'une opposition plus ou moins sourde d'une partie du corps épiscopal à la nomination du jeune patriarche et peut-être...de l'appui que l'empereur a trouvé à cette occasion dans le Sénat'.<sup>58</sup> He raises the question as to why the bishops would oppose the choice of Stephen; was it just because he was too young, or was it rather that they were expressing discontent at the replacement of Photios? Certainly Photios's clergy had a part to play in effecting his recall from exile in the 870s, so perhaps this is what they were trying to achieve in the 880s by opposing the selection of Stephen as patriarch to be. If this was so they patently failed in their aims for Leo did appoint Stephen in the face of their opposition. Of course there was a fundamental difference between the situation in the 870s and that of the 880s; on the former occasion Photios had also found support amongst the secular community in Constantinople, yet in 886 Leo is totally confident that he can take senatorial approval for granted. This difference could be explained by the fact that Photios's senatorial allies had shared his fate on the accession of Leo; effectively the senators in 886 were all Leo's men. Alternatively the senatorial support for Leo could be due to the fact that as a secular body the senators may have

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<sup>54</sup> This fact is revealed by a letter of Theodore Daphnopates concerning the appointment of Romanos's son Theophylakt as patriarch. Theophylakt was also not of the legal age, but Theodore cites the elevation of Stephen as a precedent: see J. Darrouzès and L. G. Westerink, *Théodore Daphnopatès. Correspondance* (Paris, 1978), letter 2, 45. 56-57.

<sup>55</sup> For the day of Stephen's installation see Grosdidier de Matons, 'Trois études', 191, n. 24.

<sup>56</sup> *GMC*, 849.

had less of a problem with the transgression of canon law and were willing to accept the imperial decision.<sup>59</sup> Further it does seem unlikely that the figure of Stephen himself would have caused the clergy much concern, given his own close connection with Photios. Indeed the emperor's words indicate that Photios was not a factor at all in the ecclesiastical rumblings of discontent; rather he is concerned to convince the bishops of the utter suitability of Stephen for the post.<sup>60</sup> Leo asserts that he and Stephen were born in close chronological proximity and that they grew up together, perhaps wishing to suggest that if he can be emperor then surely his brother can be patriarch. He also states that there is nothing in Stephen that is reproachful, but that 'au contraire, il a une vie surabondante en splendeurs et en beauté inflétrissable, de laquelle l'épousée immaculée, l'Église du Christ, a lieu de se réjouir. Cette affirmation de notre majesté reçue de Dieu ne vient pas de ce que nous sommes son frère...mais de ce que nous connaissons et honorons la vérité'.<sup>61</sup> In the address Leo also uses the device of answering for the archbishops, thus giving himself the reply he wants to hear. Quite simply Leo over-rode their opposition. Thus in the matter of appointing his brother as patriarch Leo achieved his goal by sheer determination and obstinacy.

Despite his youth it does seem that Stephen acquired popularity and a pious reputation. The *Life of Euthymios* comments that 'though he seemed young in years, yet was he perfect in understanding, piety and ever-increasing virtue'.<sup>62</sup> The *Life of Basil the Younger* describes Stephen as 'a man who was eminent in every virtue'.<sup>63</sup> The *Synaxarion*

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<sup>57</sup> Grosdidier de Matons, 'Trois études', 200-207; Akakios, *Λόγοι*, 160-163. See also Antonopoulou, *Homilies* (forthcoming).

<sup>58</sup> Grosdidier de Matons, 'Trois études', 199.

<sup>59</sup> It is interesting to compare the later episode where the senate was willing to recognise Leo's fourth wife Zoe Karbonopsina as augusta though the patriarch Euthymios was not: see Chapter Six below.

<sup>60</sup> Grosdidier de Matons, 'Trois études', 203. 23—205. 21.

<sup>61</sup> Grosdidier de Matons, 'Trois études', 205. 6-10. Regarding Leo's relationship with Stephen it has often been assumed that they must have got on well as brothers, unlike Leo and Alexander, but perhaps this is reading too much into the evidence. Yes, Leo did secure the patriarchate for Stephen, attesting warmly to his brother's character, but it should not be forgotten that Leo was speaking with purpose in mind, the purpose being to secure the co-operation of the patriarchate throughout his reign; such an opportunity was not to be missed at any price, even the speaking of the truth. Stephen does remain a rather vague figure, there is a lack of evidence that would give a three-dimensional portrait of him. Further to his relationship with Leo he simply appears as a willing co-operator, being the addressee of Leo's *Novels* on religious issues, and assisting his brother in fostering good relations with Euthymios.

<sup>62</sup> *VE*, 35. 4-6.

<sup>63</sup> *PG* 109, 653.

of Constantinople reveals that Stephen's memory was commemorated on 18 May, and the entry devoted to him notes that although he became patriarch when he was young he turned out well, being 'a sleepless guard and true shepherd'.<sup>64</sup> It appears that Stephen also maintained his post as *synkellos* whilst being patriarch, at least for a time, until his spiritual father Euthymios agreed to fill the office.<sup>65</sup> However Stephen's patriarchate, and the scheme for imperial control of secular and ecclesiastical authority, was cut short by his premature death in 893.<sup>66</sup> Thus after having held the position of patriarch for just six years and five months he was laid to rest in the monastery τῶν Συκεῶν.<sup>67</sup> It seems that Stephen had poor health, so his death may not have been totally unexpected<sup>68</sup>, yet it was surely still one of the major blows of Leo's early reign. The emperor now had to find someone to place in the patriarchate whom he could rely on to co-operate with him; Leo no doubt came to wish that Stephen still occupied the patriarchal throne during the time of the tetragamy crisis.

The examination of the fate of Photios does not end however with his replacement by Stephen; although Photios fell in 886-887 there is more to be said concerning him in Leo's reign. Despite Pseudo-Symeon's efforts to make us think differently it is quite clear that at the trial of 887 Photios was not condemned; Leo was angry that no conviction against the ex-patriarch had been secured, and Theodore suffered the emperor's wrath. As a *persona non grata* it seems that Photios was returned to his enforced monastic retirement. Yet it appears that Photios did not remain reviled for the remainder of his life; Leo could afford to be magnanimous after the threat had been removed and punishment inflicted. It is notable that the record of the trial in most of the chronicles presents Photios in a positive light, and Theodore is assigned the role of scapegoat in the story of the plot against Leo. The fallen patriarch also continued his career as a writer in the reign of Leo, though this does not constitute evidence that he was rehabilitated.<sup>69</sup> More significant is that Leo himself apparently presents Photios favourably in his *Epitaphios* on his parents, a text

<sup>64</sup> AASS, Propylaeum Novembris, 694.

<sup>65</sup> VE, 21, 26—23, 9.

<sup>66</sup> VE, 43, 17-19.

<sup>67</sup> GMC, 849. TC, 354, names the monastery as that of Συκεῶν.

<sup>68</sup> See the *Life of Basil the Younger*, which indicates that it was medical treatment for a persistent illness that led to Stephen's early death: PG 109, 653.

<sup>69</sup> It seems that Photios revised and enlarged his *Mystagogia* after 886: see Dvornik, *Photian Schism*, 249. A. Markopoulos, 'Νέα στοιχεία για τή χρονολόγηση τής «Βιβλιοθήκης» τοῦ Φωτίου', *Σύμμεικτα*, 4 (1987), 165-181, has argued that the famous *Bibliotheka* is also a work from the end of Photios's life.

probably written in 888. The purpose of this work was to glorify Basil, and one of the reasons Leo gives for praising his father is the peace he brought to the church, which had been strife-ridden due to the opposition of Ignatios and Photios. Leo seems to ridicule Ignatios, calling him 'le prêtre parfait qui menait la lutte à la perfection'.<sup>70</sup> The emperor describes how Basil ended the strife (which he is careful to point out had pre-existed his father's reign, thus attempting to clear him of any blame for the trouble, which of course he had added to by deposing Photios in 867): 'L'Eglise tout entière étant exilée avec son Archevêque [Photios], il ordonne son retour et tous se retrouvant réunis, ils se donnent la main droite et par le symbole de la sainte charité, le très sacré baiser, la longue dissension est supprimé'. Leo then adds that just at this moment Ignatios died so 'l'Archevêque récemment revenu de l'exil reçoit le trône et le gouvernement de tout le corps sacerdotal', and then unity finally resulted. Thus Leo portrays Photios as the legitimate archbishop, and as the instrument of ultimate unity, an image that jars with his attitude to the patriarch in 886-887. Grégoire was certainly puzzled by this apparent pro-Photios stance, and hence argued that the 'Archbishop' referred to in the text as being recalled must have been Ignatios, but this view cannot be maintained for it does not fit with the subsequent context.<sup>71</sup> It could be argued that Leo merely takes this pro-Photios line as a means of praising his father, yet this is surely not the whole explanation for such an evidently positive image of his one time enemy; there is in fact further evidence suggesting that just as Photios's fall in 886 had been part of a wider purge against his circle so his rehabilitation was part of a wider restoration of his family and friends.

Throughout Leo's reign his habit of punishing his enemies only to restore them within a few years is distinct; Photios's case was probably no different. Once again it is the *Life of Euthymios* that points the way to this conclusion, for it relates the episode of the recall of Leo Katakalon, which has a direct bearing on Euthymios's life. It is related that certain relatives of Katakalon brought pressure to bear on the emperor through Euthymios when Leo was building a monastery

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<sup>70</sup> Vogt and Hausherr, 'Oraison', 62. 16. Toynbee, *Constantine*, 598, noted that the *Epitaphios* shows Leo as more friendly to Photios than to Ignatios.

<sup>71</sup> Grégoire, 'Oraison funèbre', 629. Karlin-Hayter, *VE, Commentary*, 166, was also struck by the attitude of the funeral oration towards Photios. She comments that the 'most fascinating feature' of the *Epitaphios* 'is the solemn praise of Basil for having procured union in the Church and of Photius by implication, since he is the "one shepherd" of the one flock under whom the faithful are at last united—a year or so after this same Photius has been forced by the orator to abdicate'.

at Psamathia for his spiritual father on territory that had been confiscated from Leo Katakalon. Leo subsequently recalled Katakalon and bought the territory from him, so that Euthymios would countenance accepting it. Katakalon soon became a leading official under Leo VI, appearing as domestic of the schools in the 890s and 900s.<sup>72</sup> Karlin-Hayter herself has proposed that the *Epitaphios* did mark a turning point in Leo's reign, reflecting the end of the period of purges, and Dvornik also noted the change, arguing that the funeral oration revealed Leo's new mood.<sup>73</sup> Photios's rehabilitation would also explain a facet of the *Life of Euthymios* that Karlin-Hayter noted, that such an evidently Ignatian author could write sympathetically about Photios.<sup>74</sup> It is also worth pointing out that in his funeral oration on Euthymios Arethas refers to Photios with honour.<sup>75</sup>

Confirmation that Photios was rehabilitated comes upon his death, which Jenkins has stated occurred at the earliest in 893.<sup>76</sup> According to some of the chronicles his body was permitted to be buried in Constantinople in the monastery of Eremia, an institution that he himself had had converted from a church to a nunnery.<sup>77</sup> In addition, according to the virulently anti-Photian author of the *Life of Ignatios*, partisans of Photios after his death endeavoured to claim for him the 'honour of sainthood'.<sup>78</sup> Given the entry in the *Synaxarion* recording

<sup>72</sup> *GMC*, 855; *DAI*, I, 206. 50—208. 55.

<sup>73</sup> Karlin-Hayter, *VE, Commentary*, 165-166; Dvornik, *Photian Schism*, 250. The chronicles, for instance *GMC*, 851-852, record that Leo recalled Theodore Santabarenos (whom he had previously moved from Athens to the east) to Constantinople and granted him an allowance from the Nea Ekklesia, though they state that this happened many years after his exile.

<sup>74</sup> Karlin-Hayter, *VE, Introduction*, 39, and *Commentary*, 162-163. The attitude toward Photios may also be explained in other ways. Stylianos and Nikolaos are the real villains of the *Life*, and Stylianos punished Photios, so therefore Photios was perhaps bound to become sympathetic. Also the Ignatian sympathies of the author have been overplayed. Ignatios may have been Euthymios's master but Euthymios himself seems rather more 'moderate' than 'extremist'. Leo VI is also favoured by this author, despite his uncanonical behaviour, so thus the author appears 'moderate' too. These points only serve to highlight the dangers of talking in terms of 'moderates' and 'extremists', 'Ignatians' and 'Photians'; history is not as simple as that. Grégoire, 'Blaise', 414, also observes that Photios is not pilloried in the *Life of Nikolaos the Studite* or the *Life of Blasios*, even though one would expect him to be reviled by such 'Ignatian' texts. He took these omissions to suggest that public opinion was favourable towards Photios.

<sup>75</sup> *ASM*, I, 92. 28-29. See the comments of Jugie, 'Homélie mariales', I, 488-489.

<sup>76</sup> Jenkins, 'Note on Nicetas', 244. However he gives no explanation for this assertion.

<sup>77</sup> *GMC*, 844; *LG*, 258.

<sup>78</sup> *PG* 105, 541.

Photios's memory on 6 February it seems that they must have succeeded, and it can only be wondered what part Leo VI played in acknowledging the holy reputation of Photios.<sup>79</sup> Further, a leading member of Leo's court, the diplomat Leo Choiosphaktes, whose wife was a relative of the emperor, wrote poems commemorating the memory of several prominent contemporary figures, such as Leo the Mathematician and the patriarch Stephen, and he also wrote one on Photios.<sup>80</sup> The poem is entitled *Iambic Verses on Photios the Patriarch Who is Among the Saints*, and in it Choiosphaktes laments the passing of the compassionate intellectual Photios. He ends the poem with the final exclamation:

O Photios chief-shepherd of the church,  
 O golden-tongued and sweet-mouthed old man,  
 Whose body the tomb bears, but heaven your spirit.

The obvious conclusion to be drawn from the poem seems to be that since an official and relative of the emperor could write such a work on the death of Photios the memory of this man must have been officially rehabilitated, that in effect it was safe to honour him so. It is apparent that Photios then did not remain in disgrace, but ultimately received honour and respect from the new emperor.

Yet Photios's passing does seem rather muted for such a great figure of Byzantine history; as observed it is only Pseudo-Symeon who records his death during Leo's reign, and that maliciously. Leo may have rehabilitated Photios's reputation, but he certainly did not allow him back into the sphere of politics, and it is surely his absence from this arena that accounts for his quiet passing. By the time of his death Photios was an old man anyway, as Choiosphaktes makes explicit in his poem; it has been estimated that Photios was born around 810, so when he died he was in his eighties. He may simply have reached the end of his career due to this factor of age, although whilst in his seventies he was still a controlling force under Basil. It seems more likely that Leo was far too wary ever to let his old enemy regain a political role. Further Leo was not like his father who had to rely on the intellect of others to shape the ideology of his rule and be his spokesmen. Basil had become dependent on the intellectual

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<sup>79</sup> *AASS*, Propylaeum Novembris, 448. 19-23. The entry also states that the feast of Photios's memory was celebrated in the *propheteion* of St John the Baptist at the monastery of Eremia. For this monastery see R. Janin, *La géographie ecclésiastique de l'empire byzantin. Première partie. Le siège de Constantinople et le patriarcat oecuménique*. III. *Les églises et les monastères*, second edition (Paris, 1969), 113.

<sup>80</sup> Koliass, *Choerosphactès*, Appendice.

crutch of Photios, but his son Leo was capable of standing without support; he had the ability to think and speak for himself, skills that his father had ensured he received, and which Photios ironically had a share in imparting to him. Ultimately the end of Photios with its concomitant elevation of Stephen is most significant for what it reveals about Leo. Photios and his allies suffered swift and purposeful punishment, and Stephen was appointed to the patriarchate in the face of ecclesiastical opposition; these are the acts of an emperor with strong views, who knew what he wanted and was determined to get it.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE DOMINATE OF STYLIANOS ZAOUTZES

As Jenkins observed, in Byzantine popular memory the reign of Leo VI fell into two distinct halves, each half being determined by the official who was seen to have been the dominant influence upon the emperor.<sup>1</sup> The eunuch Samonas was credited with supremacy in the second half of the reign, but it is the corresponding figure of the first half of Leo's rule (886-899), Stylianos Zaoutzes, that this chapter is concerned with. The Byzantine perception that Stylianos had effective control of the government of the empire has persisted amongst Byzantinists, and Karlin-Hayter asserts that 'The phrase used by Laurent: "Le tout-puissant Stylien Zaoutzes", is not too strong'.<sup>2</sup> The acceptance of this view naturally has automatic repercussions for the assessment of Leo VI as emperor, and indeed he has been seen as weak, ineffectual, easily-led and indifferent to the cares of the empire.<sup>3</sup> But are such conclusions valid? Considering the position that Stylianos attained at Leo's court and the nature and extent of his power provides a means of testing this question.

Initially the origins of Stylianos and the steps by which he became Leo's leading official need to be traced. It is clear that Stylianos did have certain connections with Leo's father Basil. Both men were Macedonian Armenians, that is their families were originally from Armenia but had come to be settled in the region of Macedonia. Such a link is probably sufficient to explain why Stylianos is then found as a functionary of the court of Basil I, but Adontz has theorised further upon their relationship.<sup>4</sup> He noted that Basil had begun his career under the *strategos* of Macedonia, a man called Tzantzes, and he argued that the similarity in name between Zaoutzes and Tzantzes pointed to a connection between the two men, suggesting that Stylianos may in fact have been a son of Tzantzes. This, he said, would explain Basil's affection for Stylianos, since he was the son of his old commander. As further confirmation of his belief Adontz

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<sup>1</sup> Jenkins, 'Chronological Accuracy', 107, n. 72.

<sup>2</sup> Karlin-Hayter, *VE, Commentary*, 150.

<sup>3</sup> Karlin-Hayter, 'Military Affairs', 20, has herself commented upon these common characterisations of Leo.

<sup>4</sup> See Adontz, 'L'âge et l'origine', I, 482-483.

noted that Stylianos himself had a son called Tzantzes, concluding that this point was the 'argument décisif en faveur de notre conjecture'.<sup>5</sup> The conjecture certainly lends depth to the relationship between Basil and Stylianos, a depth that events seem to require given Zaoutzes's apparent significance towards the end of Basil's reign, when he was able to approach the emperor and discuss the issue of Leo's imprisonment.<sup>6</sup>

It is not without interest that when Stylianos is first recorded as existing during Basil's reign it is only in as much as he was the father of Leo's supposed love interest, Zoe Zaoutzaina. This is the famous incident when Theophano, recently married to Leo, believing that her husband was having an affair with this Zoe, informed her father-in-law of her suspicions. Basil acted swiftly and emphatically, assaulting his son and enforcing Zoe's marriage to a certain Theodore Gouzouniates. In passing it is clarified that Zoe was the daughter of Zaoutzes.<sup>7</sup> One is left to wonder what Stylianos's reaction to these events was. How did he feel about the emperor marrying off his daughter? Had he been aware of the relationship between his daughter and the emperor's son and heir, and if he had been, did it give him cause to reflect on how close he could become to the future emperor? Unfortunately it is difficult to gauge the exact nature of the relationship between Stylianos and Leo prior to this incident. Certainly Vogt's suggestion that Stylianos may have been Leo's tutor after Photios has no foundation.<sup>8</sup> Indeed it seems safe to assume that Stylianos cannot have been too intimately tied to Leo by 883, for he was not amongst those friends of the heir-apparent who suffered in the aftermath of the exposing of Leo's 'plot' against his father. The impression is thus conveyed that Stylianos's ties with Basil were stronger than those with Leo. However at the point of Leo's fall

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<sup>5</sup> Adontz, 'L'âge et l'origine', I, 483.

<sup>6</sup> *VT*, 11-13. It is *VT*, 11. 28, that reveals Stylianos's nickname, for Basil addresses him as 'the Ethiopian'. It is apparent that Zaoutzes's colouring was dark, for it is also alluded to in other texts. A. Sharf, 'A Source for Byzantine Jewry under the Early Macedonians', *BNJ*, 20 (1973), 302-318, esp. 304, gives a translation of a Jewish vision of Daniel which says 'And there will reign together with him [Leo VI], but uncrowned, peacefully for the space of twenty-two seasons a dark one beloved by him'. This 'dark one' is obviously Stylianos. L. Rydén, 'The Portrait of the Arab Samonas in Byzantine Literature', *Graeco-Arabica*, 3 (1984), 101-108, esp. 107, conjectures that the 'Ethiopian' in the apocalyptic *Life* of Andrew the Holy Fool 'corresponds to the dark one...of the Vision of Daniel'. S. Runciman, *The Byzantine Theocracy* (Cambridge, 1977), 180, n. 39, comments that 'The name 'Zaoutzes' is clearly derived from the Armenian word 'Zaoutch', meaning a negro'.

<sup>7</sup> For this episode see *VE*, 41. 1-8.

<sup>8</sup> Vogt, *Basile*, 423, and 'Jeunesse', 404.

Zaoutzes may have had one eye on the future, for it is related that along with Photios he prevented Basil from blinding his son.<sup>9</sup> The chronicle also relates a further detail of interest, recording the first office known to have been held by Stylianos, that of 'little hetaireiarch', meaning that he was a commander within the imperial bodyguard.<sup>10</sup>

When Zaoutzes is next encountered in 886 it is evident that he has been promoted, for he is no longer little hetaireiarch, but simply hetaireiarch, with the rank of *protospatharios*<sup>11</sup>; it may be hypothesised that Stylianos filled the higher post on the fall of Michael the hetaireiarch who was implicated in the plot of Kourkouas which had been exposed in March 886.<sup>12</sup> It was whilst holding this office that Stylianos went to the ailing Basil to persuade him to release Leo from his palatial prison, and restore him to his imperial position. The source for this episode is the *Life of Theophano*, a text that is unique in preserving a positive image of Stylianos Zaoutzes. Given its evident favouritism towards Stylianos the trustworthiness of its account of Leo's liberation in which Zaoutzes is the earthly saviour of the young emperor is called into question. Certainly none of the other sources touch on his role in this event. Yet given Leo's preference for Stylianos within his own reign it appears that the emperor did feel something like gratitude towards him, a gratitude that is understandable if the hetaireiarch had been an instrument of his release. It may be suspected that the *Life of Theophano* has exaggerated Zaoutzes's part in Basil's change of mind but it seems likely that it does preserve an element of truth, and it is compatible with Stylianos's reported part in the prevention of Leo's blinding. His role may have been inflated later due to the fact that he did become such a major figure in Leo's reign; he is not the only person credited with a part in Leo's liberation, nor the only person to whom Leo was grateful for his release. As to why Stylianos would have been concerned to effect Leo's deliverance one possibility is that he was aware of Basil's insecure position

<sup>9</sup> GMC, 846.

<sup>10</sup> This office is a problem: why the 'little'? P. Karlin-Hayter, 'L'hétériarque. L'évolution de son rôle du *De Ceremoniis* au *Traité des Offices*', *JOB*, 23 (1974), 101-143, esp. 117-118, repr. *Studies in*, XVIII, suggests that the adjective 'little' was used to denigrate Stylianos by an author who consistently blackens him and who favours Romanos Lekapenos, who is described as the 'great' hetaireiarch. This fails to convince. It seems safer to assume that the 'little' hetaireiarch was simply a subordinate of the 'great' hetaireiarch. Entering the realms of speculation, perhaps Stylianos was 'little' by virtue of being the chief of the bodyguard of the 'little' emperor, Leo himself.

<sup>11</sup> VI, 11. 16.

<sup>12</sup> GMC, 847.

towards the end of his life and thus by prompting Leo's release he wished to restore the stability of the Macedonian dynasty and in so doing secure his own position as a faithful servant of the family. Another factor in Stylianos's concern may have been the knowledge that Leo was attached to his daughter. Further, as hetaireiarch it is possible that Zaoutzes had a certain responsibility for the imprisoned Leo and thus may have had contact with the disinherited heir during the period 883-886, contact that Leo could have used to gain Stylianos's favour and agency. The *Life of Theophano* does indicate that the impounded Leo was ordered to be guarded<sup>13</sup>, and it is striking that when a vision of St Demetrios appeared to Leo and Theophano at night they initially thought that this militaristic figure had been dispatched by the emperor to kill them; perhaps such duties would have fallen within the sphere of the hetaireiarch.<sup>14</sup> It is also notable that Basil entrusted Stylianos with the liberation of Leo, possibly indicating that he had been responsible for him whilst he was in prison.<sup>15</sup> If these conjectures carry any weight it appears that Leo did indeed have reason to be grateful to Stylianos in 886, and this would be a factor in his subsequent popularity with the emperor. As it transpired he did not have long to wait before reaping a reward for just over a month later Basil died following a hunting accident.

It is widely accepted that it was the dying Basil who was responsible for initially elevating Zaoutzes to a prime position within the administration, arranging for Stylianos to be the guardian (*epitropos*) of his heirs. Yet the fundamental beliefs that Basil left Stylianos as *epitropos* and that he was a prime mover in Leo's administration from the start can be challenged. As these attestations of Stylianos's position and power at the beginning of Leo's reign come from the *Life of Euthymios* the issue here is the quality of its evidence. Granted, this source is of extreme importance for details of Leo's reign and does seem to preserve a startlingly realistic account of this emperor and other figures, but its details should not be uncritically accepted, given its evident bias against the people who were enemies of Euthymios, primarily Stylianos and Nikolaos. The *Life of Euthymios* reports that Basil left Stylianos in charge of the empire, 'committing to him the direction of all matters, ecclesiastical and political'.<sup>16</sup> When Leo then

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<sup>13</sup> *VT*, 8. 6.

<sup>14</sup> *VT*, 10. 10-14. Just as Demetrios was the militaristic heavenly saviour of Leo so Stylianos was his militaristic earthly saviour; the parallels between Demetrios and Stylianos have been noted by Magdalino, 'Demetrios and Leo', 201.

<sup>15</sup> *VT*, 13. 9-11.

<sup>16</sup> *VE*, 5. 23-27.

replaced his dead father he 'immediately appointed Stylianos Zaoutzes protomagistros, and not long after promoted him basilopator, and it was notorious that in this same Stylianos were vested control and responsibility for all decisions to be taken by the government'.<sup>17</sup> Thus for the author of this *Life* Stylianos was responsible for all the governmental acts of the early reign; he was the force behind the purge of Photios and his relations, and it was he who ordered Theodore Santabarenos to be blinded.

Turning to the other major sources for Leo's reign certain similarities are seen, but also significant differences. It is apparent that the author of the *Life of Theophano* also saw Zaoutzes as the administrator of the empire. He narrates that after Basil's death Leo busied himself with divine matters whilst Stylianos, who was after a short time proclaimed basileiopator, 'accomplished the public cares of affairs and the Roman politeia was captained justly and with good laws and with piety'.<sup>18</sup> But the difference in the perception of the character of Stylianos's government is not the only divergence; although the *Life of Theophano* favours Stylianos and is a source that has its origins in the period before his fall from grace it has no record of Basil leaving Zaoutzes as guardian of his sons, a fact that is even more peculiar when the trouble it went to to convey Stylianos's intercession with Basil and his role as Leo's saviour is considered. As far as this text is concerned it was Leo, not Basil, who was responsible for making Stylianos the governor of the empire.

The evidence of the chronicles further confounds the assertions of the *Life of Euthymios*. Only one of the chroniclers, Pseudo-Symeon, relates the detail that Stylianos was left as *epitropos* by Basil, but it appears that he took this information directly from the *Life of Euthymios* given that it does not fit with the account of the early reign that the chronicle tradition preserves.<sup>19</sup> Karlin-Hayter has often defended the validity of the evidence of the *Life of Euthymios* against that of the chronicles, pointing to the relatively early date of the composition of the *Life* between 920 and 925, the fact that it was written by someone obviously well acquainted with the events and figures of the reign of Leo VI, and contrasting these details with the fact that the chronicles were only compiled in the mid-tenth century and have a very different nature.<sup>20</sup> Yet given Jenkins's assertion that the narra-

<sup>17</sup> *VE*, 7. 3-7.

<sup>18</sup> *VT*, 14. 16-20.

<sup>19</sup> *Ps. Sym.*, 699-700. For its dependence on the *Life of Euthymios* for this point see Karlin-Hayter, *VE*, *Introduction*, 11.

<sup>20</sup> Karlin-Hayter, 'Théophano', 17-19, and *VE*, *Introduction*, 57.

tives of the reigns of Basil I, Leo VI and Alexander in the chronicles are based on Byzantine annals, it seems that these texts should preserve a more accurate account of the order and progression of events, a fact that is of the utmost importance when considering Stylianos's career and status in Leo's reign. The chronicles do not cast Zaoutzes as *epitropos*, nor do they even convey that he was Leo's right-hand man; it is clear that it was Andrew who filled this role. It was Andrew who was dispatched to bring back Michael's body from Chrysopolis; it was Andrew who denounced Photios in Hagia Sophia, and was subsequently chief interrogator at the trial of the ex-patriarch and Santabarenos; it was Andrew who had been suspected of being Leo's chief ally in the 'plot' of 883. Certainly the chroniclers do record other figures who were allies of the young emperor in 886-887, like Stephen the *magistros* and John Hagiopolites, but Stylianos is not even found amongst this group. He was obviously favoured since he landed the job of logothete of the drome and the rank of *magistros* before Christmas 886<sup>21</sup>, but as yet it seems that he was not dominant.

Thus it is undeniable that the *Life of Euthymios* has exaggerated Stylianos's career and his authority. It alleged that he immediately received the title of *protomagistros*, but not only do the chronicles cast doubt on this, so does a seal of Stylianos. This object preserves an inscription that confirms the chronicle account of Zaoutzes's career; he is described as *magistros, anthypatos, patrikios*, imperial *protospatharios* and logothete of the drome. Laurent was fully aware of the implications of this artifact, stating that the inscription 'met en question l'affirmation de la *Vita Euthymii*...selon laquelle la dignité concédée par le monarque lors de son accession au trône aurait été celle de *protomagistros*'.<sup>22</sup> The assertion that both the *Life of Euthymios* and the *Life of Theophano* make, that Stylianos soon became basileiopatōr, seems rather premature given that the chronicles indicate that he was promoted to this office between August 891 and May 893.<sup>23</sup> Thus it emerges that Stylianos was not immediately the major official of Leo's reign, that his career progression is rather less sudden than some sources indicate. As for the emperor's growing favouritism towards Stylianos its cause can only be conjectured. It was probably a combination of factors: the apparent death of Andrew who disappears from history after the trial of Photios; maybe Leo's disenchantment with those men who failed to convict Photios at his trial in 887; Leo's

<sup>21</sup> For this date see Jenkins, 'Chronological Accuracy', 106.

<sup>22</sup> V. Laurent, *Le corpus des sceaux de l'empire byzantin*, II, *L'administration centrale* (Paris, 1981), 206.

<sup>23</sup> Jenkins, 'Chronological Accuracy', 106.

natural attachment to Stylianos as one of his saviours; and perhaps also the fact that Leo appears to have begun an affair with Zoe Zaoutzaina in his early reign.

Before considering Stylianos's increasing prominence and the nature of his relationship with Leo it is necessary to address the question of why the *Life of Euthymios* would want to telescope Stylianos's career and exaggerate the extent of his power. Although the *Life of Theophano* can be accused of a similar crime, its crime is much more understandable. It has a simplified historical narrative, and it also reflects a time when Stylianos was favoured by Leo VI. The chronicles and the *Life of Euthymios* however preserve the more typical image of Stylianos, that of the evil schemer. Notably these latter sources were produced several decades after the disgrace of Stylianos's family, who were caught plotting against the emperor. This event allowed Zaoutzes to be reinvented as a villain to explain away the crimes, failings and unpopular acts of others, as can be seen in the cases of Nikephoros Phokas the elder and Leo VI himself. To understand this phenomenon it is useful to consider these cases further, starting with that of Nikephoros Phokas.

The chronicle of the Continuator of Theophanes has much more to say about Phokas than his colleagues, and it appears that he must have incorporated into his narrative a source that the others did not possess, a eulogistic account of the life of Nikephoros Phokas the elder. This man held the position of domestic of the schools under Leo VI after the death of Andrew, notably in the initial stages of the Bulgarian war of the mid 890s, the details of which are preserved by the chroniclers.<sup>24</sup> The emperor dispatched Nikephoros as commander of the army and Eustathios Argyros as captain of the navy to Bulgaria to pressurize its ruler Symeon into making peace, with the help of Magyar muscle. This strategy of the emperor seemed to work, for the Bulgarian leader sent to Byzantium for a diplomat to come to him and arrange a truce, and then the Byzantine land and sea forces were withdrawn. But once this threat was removed Symeon immediately turned to war again, and inflicted a terrible blow on the Magyar allies of the Byzantines, and thus humiliated Leo VI. It is in the aftermath of this episode that the Continuator of Theophanes relates his unique information concerning Phokas. Amongst the extra details is one anecdote where it is alleged that Nikephoros, who is described as dear to the emperor, was approached by Stylianos who offered him his daughter in marriage. Upon Nikephoros's refusal, reputedly

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<sup>24</sup> *TC*, 357-359; *GMC*, 853-855.

for fear of attracting the suspicions of Leo, Zaoutzes was angered and brought charges against Nikephoros and had him removed from office.<sup>25</sup> As Grégoire already concluded this anecdote is untrustworthy, since it is evidently based on romantic and legendary material.<sup>26</sup> It deliberately casts Stylianos in the role of evil schemer to explain away Nikephoros's fall from favour in 895, which was no doubt embarrassing for his prominent descendants. The more likely explanation of Phokas's demotion was that the emperor was venting his anger at the failure of the campaign on the commander of the Byzantine army.

A similar case of the distortion of historical events in order to shift blame onto Stylianos has been deduced by Magdalino, with regard to the infamous episode of the Bulgarian market.<sup>27</sup> The chronicles tell us that through the intermediary of Stylianos's beloved eunuch slave Mousikos two Greek businessmen, Staurakios and Kosmas, acquired the rights to administer the Bulgarian market that was based in Constantinople. They then transferred the market to Thessalonike and extorted higher dues from the Bulgarian merchants, who complained about this to the ruler of their country, Symeon. The Bulgarian leader then requested the Byzantine emperor to put a stop to this iniquitous behaviour, but Leo dismissed the protest as nonsense, due to his attachment to Stylianos who was in turn attached to Mousikos. This out of hand rejection prompted Symeon to declare war on the Byzantines.<sup>28</sup> Thus the chronicles show that it was the corruption and influence of Stylianos that led to a conflict which was to trouble the empire for many years to come. Magdalino has however sought to explain the transfer of the market to Thessalonike in different terms. He stresses that Leo had an especial devotion to St Demetrios, probably due to the vision of this saint that had come to him during his imprisonment with the cheering message of his future liberation and rule.<sup>29</sup> Working from the fact that upon his accession Leo rewarded all the agents of his salvation Magdalino interprets the case of the Bulgarian market in this context. Thessalonike was the centre of Demetrios's cult, and moving the market there would benefit the city, its church and its saint. If Leo's policy is interpreted as an act of piety it is then much easier to understand why the emperor rejected Symeon's complaint so abruptly. Yet the policy was ill-fated for it

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<sup>25</sup> *TC*, 359-360.

<sup>26</sup> Grégoire, 'Carrière'. See also the remarks of Karlin-Hayter, *VE, Commentary*, 151.

<sup>27</sup> Magdalino, 'Demetrios and Leo'.

<sup>28</sup> *GMC*, 853.

<sup>29</sup> *VT*, 10. 10-30.

caused a protracted war to break out, and it was this result that led to the 'official' version of the transfer of the market that is found in the chronicles, where blame is largely laid on Stylianos, and the part of St Demetrios is concealed. Thus Leo, just like the Phokas family, was capable of rewriting history to exonerate himself from censure at the expense of Stylianos Zaoutzes.

It is in such a light that the evidence of the *Life of Euthymios* can be viewed. This text endeavours to present every evil and reprehensible governmental act of the early reign of Leo VI as a deed of Stylianos, and by so doing it excuses the emperor from any blame. It is striking that the author of this text, although having Euthymios as his hero, paints a very sympathetic portrait of the emperor; Stylianos and Nikolaos are depicted as the real villains even though Leo and his spiritual father did have their own fair share of conflicts. Karlin-Hayter has conjectured that the author was a member of the imperial court under Leo<sup>30</sup>, and it may be that he did have a genuine admiration for the emperor which has affected his presentation of the emperor and other people. A further factor may be the nature of the text as hagiography; what the *Life* conveys is a struggle between Stylianos and Euthymios for the prize of Leo's soul, a theme perhaps not unconsciously included. It is vital to remember that this is hagiography and not historiography; the nature of the *Life* can delude, witness Kazhdan who described it as a Psamathian chronicle.<sup>31</sup> The artistic licence of an edifying Christian text is certainly at play. Stylianos and Euthymios are established as opposing forces; Stylianos is the political realist who subordinates everything to the securing and maintaining of earthly power, whilst Euthymios stands for Christian morality, and can see that terrestrial domination through force is ultimately worthless, for the condition of one's soul is all that matters. Euthymios and Stylianos symbolise the powers of good and evil, and Leo is caught between them in the dilemma common to all humans, whether to live life as one should or as one wants. The author apparently manipulates the history of Leo's reign to imbue it with a Christian message, and it is this which perhaps explains why he is so insistent on Stylianos's absolute power, for he wants to depict Leo's dilemma in physical terms. Thus his declaration regarding the extent of Stylianos's power can be questioned, and Karlin-Hayter herself has commented that the *Life* 'certainly exaggerates Leo's non-participation' in the purge of the early reign, though she asserts that 'The

<sup>30</sup> Karlin-Hayter, *VE, Introduction*, 34-37.

<sup>31</sup> See Karlin-Hayter, *VE, Introduction*, 6, and 'Notes on the "Vita Euthymii"', *Byz*, 32 (1962), 317-322.

reality of power, by common consent of the sources, was, during the first years of Leo's reign, lodged with Zaoutzes'.<sup>32</sup> It is this question of Stylianos's power and his developing relationship with the emperor that needs to be considered now.

Thus far it has emerged that Stylianos was not immediately the leading figure in Leo's administration. However it is apparent from the *Life of Theophano* that Stylianos did come to be recognised by Leo himself as his right-hand man, aiding the emperor in the running of the state. How did this situation come about? On what was Zaoutzes's authority based? How absolute was his power? These are all questions that need to be addressed if Leo and his early reign are to be understood. Although Stylianos was certainly not initially dominant he did have a significant position at court; the emperor promoted him from the job of the commander of the imperial bodyguard to that of logothete of the drome, a job of not inconsiderable importance.<sup>33</sup> This office in the ninth and tenth centuries entailed responsibilities involving diplomacy, ceremony and internal security. Miller was of the opinion that the office had attained its peak of importance in the early ninth century when it was held by Theoktistos (842-856), who is often perceived as the empress Theodora's prime minister. After the assassination of Theoktistos in 856 Miller believes the importance of the post declined, but wonders whether the appointment of Stylianos to the office would 'seem to reverse this tendency towards mediocrity'.<sup>34</sup> However he concludes that Zaoutzes's prominence under Leo was 'not based on his logothetship...but in fact was owing to the office/rank with which he had been invested at the same time, that of *protomagistros*'.<sup>35</sup> Certainly it is clear that amongst the holders of the rank of *magistros* in late ninth-century Byzantium there were two that did enjoy exceptional status, and this is expressed through the distinct functions that were assigned to them. One of these was indeed called the *protomagistros* (or simply the *magistros*), and he was the leading member of the senatorial order. Upon him would devolve responsibility for the imperial administration when the emperor was absent; the special duties of the other distinct *magistros* were connected with ceremonial participation.<sup>36</sup> However the belief that Stylianos

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<sup>32</sup> Karlin-Hayter, *VE, Introduction*, 58.

<sup>33</sup> For the functions and significance of this office see D. A. Miller, 'The Logothete of the Drome in the Middle Byzantine Period', *Byz*, 36 (1966), 438-470. See also Oikonomidès, *Listes*, 311; Bury, *Administrative System*, 91-92.

<sup>34</sup> Miller, 'Drome', 465.

<sup>35</sup> Miller, 'Drome', 465-466.

<sup>36</sup> For these two distinctive *magistroi* see Bury, *Administrative System*, 29-33; Oikonomidès, *Listes*, 294.

was created *protomagistros* at the same time as he became logothete has been disputed; he certainly attained the rank of a *magistros* but there is no reason to think that this indicated he was the leading *magistros*. Yet Miller's assertion that Stylianos's prominence was based on his rank as *magistros* does eventually prove to be true; in the dedication to Stylianos recorded at the head of Leo's collection of *Novels*, most of which are also addressed to him, the emperor describes Zaoutzes as 'the *magistros* of divine offices', and elsewhere in the corpus of new laws he is also called 'ὁ μεγαλοπρεπέστατος μάγιστρος'.<sup>37</sup> Thus Stylianos did come to be identified by his rank rather than by his office, and it appears that he did ultimately emerge as the prime 'effective' *magistros*, a position that had evolved out of the old office of *magister officiorum*.<sup>38</sup> He then rose even further than this in the imperial administration; Leo created for him the brand new office of basileiopator, the highest secular magistracy within the empire which was only held once more in the history of Byzantium, by Romanos Lekapenos in 919.<sup>39</sup> Byzantinists have had difficulty in explaining the name and function of this office. Bury asserted that 'The general care of affairs of state was recognized as belonging to this office' and that the name meant 'empress's father'.<sup>40</sup> Grumel, demonstrating that Zaoutzes became basileiopator before the death of Theophano, and thus proving that one cannot explain the sense of the name through Leo's relationship with Zoe, saw in the name of the office a mark of Leo's esteem for his saviour who had delivered him from prison and re-established his right of succession to the empire.<sup>41</sup> Jenkins stressed that the name had no marital significance, and opined that it was rather 'an honorary title implying spiritual parentage or guardianship of the sovereign'.<sup>42</sup> It was Karlin-Hayter who rightly maintained that the name was not one of rank but of office, and believed that it had the connotation of being the 'protector' and 'tutor of a youthful emperor'.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> See Schminck, 'Datierung', 91, and 108, n. 127 and 128. For the *Novels* see Noailles and Dain, *Les nouvelles*.

<sup>38</sup> See Bury, *Administrative System*, 29. It seems that by identifying Stylianos as the *magister officiorum* Leo was being deliberately antiquarian: see Tougher, 'Non-Campaigning' (forthcoming).

<sup>39</sup> For Leo's institution of the office see Oikonomidès, *Listes*, 101-102. Here Philotheos describes the office that was created by Leo as the 'first and greatest' of the offices of the imperial administration. For Romanos Lekapenos holding the office see *TC*, 394-395; Runciman, *Romanus Lecapenus*, 60.

<sup>40</sup> Bury, *Administrative System*, 115.

<sup>41</sup> Grumel, 'Chronologie', 36-40.

<sup>42</sup> Jenkins, 'Chronological Accuracy', 106.

<sup>43</sup> P. Karlin-Hayter and A. Leroy-Molinghen, 'Basileopator', *Byz*, 38 (1968), 278-281, esp. 279.

Oikonomidès stated that 'le basileopatôr avait les pleins pouvoirs administratifs, et était parfois considéré comme le tuteur du souverain'.<sup>44</sup> From these assessments of the office it is clear that Byzantinists have not really been sure of the exact function of the basileiopatôr; all they could do was look at the examples of the two men who held the office, Stylianos and Romanos, and deduce the responsibilities of the post from such a consideration. It is no wonder that the understanding of the office has proved so difficult, for the chroniclers obscured the matter by deliberately linking the promotion of Stylianos to the new office of 'father of the emperor' with the fact that the emperor was having an affair with Zaoutzes's daughter.<sup>45</sup> Maybe even to contemporaries the creation and function of the office was puzzling; they certainly differ in their spelling of its name. Indeed Schminck has argued that it is wrong to accept the title of Stylianos's new office as meaning 'father of the emperor'; the name should in fact be spelt 'basileiopatôr' (as has been adopted in this work) and not 'basileopatôr'.<sup>46</sup> Thus Stylianos was not 'father of the emperor' but 'father of the palace'. This reading makes much more sense for several reasons. It dispenses once and for all with the false notion that Leo's relationship with Zoe Zaoutzaina had some bearing on the creation of the office; the idea that Leo at the age of at least twenty-five still needed a father figure to guide him in the affairs of state is patently absurd anyway; and it is appropriate to what is known of Stylianos's role at this time, for he both lived in the palace and was seen to be the emperor's right-hand man with a degree of authority over the rest of the imperial officials. The name itself certainly suggests the unique degree to which Stylianos had risen in the imperial administration by the early 890s. As to the specific functions that the office entailed one is none the wiser; it may be that Leo simply desired to grant Stylianos an office of exceptional title to match the exceptional position and role that he had informally acquired. Thus throughout the early years of Leo's reign it is clear that Stylianos was becoming an increasingly eminent political figure. Yet does this necessarily indicate that he was all-powerful? What was his role in the governing of the empire, and how far did his authority extend?

As far as Miller was concerned Stylianos was indeed a wielder of power even before he attained the position of basileiopatôr, for he

<sup>44</sup> Oikonomidès, *Listes*, 307.

<sup>45</sup> *GMC*, 852; Grumcl, 'Chronologic', 39-40.

<sup>46</sup> See Schminck, 'Datierung', 108-109, n. 130. Schminck cites seal evidence, but it is worth noting that the *Life of Theophano*, a text that is well informed about the early career and popularity of Stylianos, names him as basileiopatôr and not basileopatôr like so many later texts: see *VT*, 14. 18.

asserts that it 'added no practical influence to that which he already possessed'.<sup>47</sup> Indeed it seems that the collection of *Novels* which amply attests to the primary position that Stylianos held in Leo's administration was written before Zaoutzes reached this unique office, when he was the *protomagistros*.<sup>48</sup> But does the dedication in this collection of laws reveal anything about the extent of Stylianos's power? Ostrogorsky was of the opinion that Zaoutzes was probably the real author of the *Novels*, basing his conclusion on the sixth-century example of the emperor Justinian and his praetorian prefect John of Cappadocia and the fact that Leo legislated little after Stylianos's death.<sup>49</sup> If it was true that Stylianos was the author of the *Novels* this would indicate that he was indeed the ruling force behind Leo's throne. However Noailles concluded on the basis of the distinctive personal style of the *Novels* that only Leo VI himself could have written the collection.<sup>50</sup> Schminck has also rejected the theory of Stylianos's authorship of the *Novels*, though he does allow that Leo may have been stimulated in his legal work by Zaoutzes.<sup>51</sup> The fact remains however that Stylianos is the dedicatee of the collection; does this signify that he was all-powerful? It seems salutary to remember that although Stephen has seventeen of the one hundred and thirteen *Novels* directed towards him this is taken as proof that he was obedient to his brother's will; referring to *Novel* seventeen where Leo states that his brother left rulings on ecclesiastical matters to him, Karlin-Hayter comments that 'The impression one gets is that Stephen was as docile as had been hoped'.<sup>52</sup> This view undermines the notion that Stylianos is evidently powerful because most of the *Novels* are addressed to him. It seems rather more likely that Zaoutzes is the addressee of the *Novels* that touch on secular matters not because he was excessively powerful, but because as *protomagistros* he was Leo's supreme secular official, just as Stephen, who was the addressee of the ecclesiastical legislation, was the supreme ecclesiastical official. Something of Stylianos's duties as Leo's supreme secular official may be revealed in an episode in the *Life of Euthymios* concerning Zaoutzes and Euthymios. It is related that although Euthymios had accepted the office of *synkellos*, taking it over from Stephen, he did not come into Constantinople from the monas-

<sup>47</sup> Miller, 'Drome', 466.

<sup>48</sup> Schminck, 'Datierung', 91.

<sup>49</sup> Ostrogorsky, *State*, 245.

<sup>50</sup> Noailles and Dain, *Les nouvelles*, vii-viii. For this view see also Van der Wal and Lokin, *Sources du droit*, 86; P. Karlin-Hayter, 'Aréthas et le droit d'asile. A propos d'un article récent', *Byz*, 34 (1964), 613-617, esp. 615, repr. *Studies in*, VII.

<sup>51</sup> Schminck, 'Datierung', 97, n. 10. Certainly in *Novel* 92 Leo attests that Stylianos suggested this decree to him: see Noailles and Dain, *Les nouvelles*, 303. 11-17.

<sup>52</sup> Karlin-Hayter, *VE, Commentary*, 158.

tery of St Theodore to fulfill his duties. Consequently Leo 'charged Zaoutzes with looking into the matter', and Stylianos wrote a letter reminding the lax *synkellos* of his responsibilities.<sup>53</sup> From this incident it appears that Stylianos did have a recognised position as the leading imperial official whose duties included overseeing the functioning of his colleagues beneath him. It could then have appeared to contemporaries that Leo had transferred to Stylianos governmental functions that were usually the emperor's alone, that Zaoutzes did have a measure of imperial power, a perception that the creation of the office of *basileiopator* no doubt added to. However thus far no reason has been discovered to justify the assertion that Stylianos was all-powerful; this issue requires further consideration.

Of all the sources that insist on Stylianos's totality of power the *Life of Euthymios* is the most vehement. It was Stylianos who was in control of all affairs, political and ecclesiastical; it was Stylianos who deposed Photios and extracted a resignation from him; it was Stylianos who moved against the patriarch's relatives, confiscating their property, tonsuring them and exiling them; it was Stylianos who gave the order for Theodore Santabarenos to be blinded. But not only do the chronicles point to the fact that Leo himself and his early allies were behind the purge, the *Life of Euthymios* contradicts itself by clearly revealing the limitations of Stylianos's power; he does not always get his way. Karlin-Hayter was not unaware of the fact that Zaoutzes could be thwarted by the emperor, but since she believed the basic point of the *Life* that Stylianos was *epitropos* and had a significant role in the making of the policy of Leo's reign from its first day, she took this as evidence that Leo became restless with the domination of Zaoutzes and that his 'influence was more and more limited'.<sup>54</sup> Yet it may rather be that Leo was never so dominated as has been believed. When the evidence of the *Life* is considered it is found that as early as Chapter Two an incident is encountered that reveals that Stylianos did not have total control over the emperor. It is related that Zaoutzes was only moved to pursue the excessive purge against Photios and his relatives because Euthymios had persuaded the emperor to be reconciled with those who had already fallen victim to the

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<sup>53</sup> *VE*, 23, 12-28. Karlin-Hayter, *VE, Commentary*, 168, argues that Euthymios became *synkellos* between 20 July 888 and the end of February 889; Stylianos's reprimand must have followed not long after Euthymios's appointment.

<sup>54</sup> Karlin-Hayter, *VE, Introduction*, 58-59, and *Commentary*, 151, 155-156. However she also asserts that 'Leo was not only authoritarian but strong-willed, profoundly conscious of his responsibilities, determined to be well-informed and to pursue the course he considered suitable': *VE, Commentary*, 156.

new regime.<sup>55</sup> Stylianos thus acted out of anger at the influence of the emperor's spiritual father, and here begins the contest between Zaoutzes and Euthymios for the prize of Leo's soul, a theme that leads the author to present the early reign as a polarised power struggle; but he cannot prevent the 'real' position peeping through his text, and so incidents that highlight the limitations of Zaoutzes's power are revealed. In the matter of the conflict between Stylianos and Euthymios Leo forced Zaoutzes to be reconciled to the monk<sup>56</sup>; when it came down to it Stylianos had to please the emperor by following his wishes. A further example of the real situation is found in the recall of Leo Katakalon. When the emperor was building a monastery on Katakalon's confiscated property for Euthymios the monk refused to countenance taking possession of it unless everything was above board, that is that Katakalon was recalled and the land paid for and legitimately acquired. Leo duly acquiesced in Euthymios's wishes, but Stylianos was furious at this turn of events, attacking the monk for favouring the enemies of the emperor.<sup>57</sup> When the shoe is on the other foot and Leo acts in a manner that displeases or injures Euthymios the hagiographer stresses excessively that Stylianos had influenced the emperor's decision, but his efforts are unconvincing. When it is related that Euthymios opposed Leo over his proposed divorce from Theophano and the emperor then rejected his spiritual father and no longer sought his company the *Life* somewhat unnecessarily adds by way of an explanation of this action that Leo was 'carried away to some extent by Zaoutzes' slanders'.<sup>58</sup> It is easy to imagine that the emperor needed absolutely no encouragement to treat Euthymios in such a manner. A similar example is encountered when Euthymios again opposed Leo in marital matters. After Theophano's death the emperor wished to marry Zoe Zaoutzaina but his spiritual father refused to countenance such a union, so Leo exiled him to the monastery of St Diomedes for two years. Once more the emperor's action is attributed to the encouragement of Zaoutzes<sup>59</sup>, but again it can be contested that Leo needed no such prompting to act against the obstructive monk. For proof of such contestations a consideration of the relationship of Euthymios and Leo after the death of Stylianos is instructive; they still continued to disagree and

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<sup>55</sup> *VE*, 11. 10-13.

<sup>56</sup> *VE*, 21. 4-9.

<sup>57</sup> *VE*, 29. 22—33. 4.

<sup>58</sup> *VE*, 43. 12-16.

<sup>59</sup> *VE*, 47. 1-35.

fall out without any help from the basileiopator.<sup>60</sup> The real reason for their arguments was Leo's self-will, as Euthymios himself is said to have recognised.<sup>61</sup> In connection with the episode of the exiling of Euthymios to the monastery of St Diomedes due to his opposition to the emperor marrying Zoe Zaoutzaina it is notable that although the *Life* depicts Stylianos doing his utmost to push through Leo's marriage to his daughter it nevertheless transpires that he did not marry Zoe immediately after Theophano's death, but only after a significant chronological gap. Leo banished Euthymios to the monastery for two years, and from the chronicles it is known that Zoe Zaoutzaina was empress for one year and eight months.<sup>62</sup> Yet when Euthymios did emerge from the monastery it is clear that Zoe was still empress<sup>63</sup>; at this time he even witnessed a ceremony where the holy relic of the girdle of the Virgin was removed from its casket and spread over Zoe in an attempt to rid her of an unclean spirit.<sup>64</sup> Such details revealing that Leo was not rushed into marriage with Zoe hardly convey or support the concept of the all-powerful Stylianos. Other details in the *Life* also point to the limitations of Zaoutzes's influence over the emperor. When Stylianos sought to denigrate Euthymios to the emperor as he wished to prevent Leo appointing the monk as patriarch in the wake of Stephen's death in 893 he could not do so openly, but instead paid one of the court mimes, Lampoudios, to ridicule the spiritual father of the emperor in the course of the after-dinner entertainments that the mimes usually provided. But Leo was not amused, and ejected Lampoudios from the court.<sup>65</sup> Such underhand activity hardly indicates that Stylianos was the recognised governmental power of the day in whom all decision-making was vested. Finally the *Life of Euthymios* indicates that Stylianos even plotted against Leo, an allegation that may be doubted since it comes from such a virulently biased source, but it perhaps unconsciously reveals the truth that Zaoutzes was not the real power of Leo's early reign, that to secure domination he would have had to get rid of the emperor.<sup>66</sup> Thus although the *Life* seeks to portray Stylianos as all-powerful its own evidence does not support this assertion.

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<sup>60</sup> See *VE*, 55. 20-34, and 61. 35—65. 26.

<sup>61</sup> *VE*, 61. 18-20.

<sup>62</sup> *GMC*, 857.

<sup>63</sup> *VE*, 49. 11-25.

<sup>64</sup> See Karlin-Hayter, 'Théophano', 13-14.

<sup>65</sup> *VE*, 43. 17—45. 13.

<sup>66</sup> *VE*, 15. 8-13, 19. 23—21. 2, and 37. 11-19.

Consideration of the evidence of the chronicles also hardly leads to the conclusion that Zaoutzes was all-powerful. The story concerning the transfer of the Bulgarian market to Thessalonike can be reinterpreted to show that this was not 'just a sordid tale of corruption and blind favouritism'.<sup>67</sup> The deposition of Nikephoros Phokas can likewise be re-read as punishment inflicted by the emperor due to the military success of the Bulgars, not as underhand revenge by Stylianos. However even if these stories are taken on their own terms it is notable that Stylianos only has power through subversion and the favour of the emperor. The tale of the projected assassination of Leo whilst he slept at τὰ Δαμιανοῦ by certain relatives of Stylianos is of interest in that it marks a deterioration in the relations between the emperor and his basileiopator<sup>68</sup>; Leo and Zaoutzes fell out, and were only reconciled by the *magistros* Leo Theodotakes.<sup>69</sup> Thus by the mid-890s, before Theophano's death, Stylianos's standing with the emperor was already compromised. It must have suffered further when the emperor personally exposed the supposed corruption that the basileiopator effected through his agents Staurakios and Mousikos, who took gifts from both generals and magistrates on behalf of Stylianos; Leo had these two men tonsured, but no punishment is recorded for Zaoutzes.<sup>70</sup> It seems that the basileiopator died soon after this incident, and not in the palace as the chroniclers record but in his new home near the palace, as a scholion of Arethas reveals.<sup>71</sup> Indeed Stylianos's relocation to a residence outside the palace is a further expression of his decreasing status with the emperor, and although Stylianos was not removed from office it is hard to escape the impression that by the end of his life he was no longer a significant power; further, the evidence examined thus far indicates that the position he had held under Leo never qualified him to be called all-powerful.

However before concluding on the extent and nature of Stylianos's power it is necessary to examine one striking facet of the administration of the empire during Leo's early reign that has already been touched on, the role played by Zaoutzes's relatives. The *Life of Euthymios* and the chronicles reveal that they benefited from Stylianos's standing as the right-hand man of the emperor, and that some of them came to fill important posts at the centre of the empire,

<sup>67</sup> Magdalino, 'Demetrios and Leo', 200.

<sup>68</sup> For τὰ Δαμιανοῦ see Janin, *Les églises et les monastères*, 84.

<sup>69</sup> *TC*, 360-361; *GMC*, 855-856.

<sup>70</sup> *GMC*, 857.

<sup>71</sup> Karlin-Hayter, *VE, Commentary*, 152.

the imperial court. Does the fact that the emperor was apparently surrounded by the family and friends of Zaoutzes suggest that there is some truth in the idea that he was all-powerful? The *Life of Euthymios* naturally construes the prominence of the relatives and friends of Stylianos in a sinister light, a perception Zaoutzes himself objected to. Fearing that he had already been slandered to Leo by Euthymios as dangerously ambitious Stylianos confronted the emperor about these accusations in an attempt to deny them, saying "I know, sire, that your mouth-happy monk...will have produced information about me, lyingly telling your Majesty 'He is planning to seize power, to which end he showers on his friends and relations high posts and promotions'"<sup>72</sup> This incident suggests that Stylianos himself must have conferred the offices and titles, but could this really have happened given that imperial ceremony usually accompanied such elevations? Is it to be imagined that Leo transferred such duties onto Stylianos? It seems unlikely; and even if it was true the emperor must have been aware that it was happening. By whatever means it occurred it is clear that it is a fact that the family and friends of Stylianos did acquire positions within the imperial administration; confirmation is found in the chronicles. Stylianos's old office of hetaireiarch came to be filled by Nikolaos, his son-in-law.<sup>73</sup> Two sons of Nikolaos are also found with positions at court; Podaron became the *drungarios* of the watch upon the removal of John after the emperor's life had been endangered at τὰ Δαμιανοῦ in around 894/5, whilst Basil is found as *epeiktes* soon after the death of his aunt Zoe Zaoutzaina in 899/900.<sup>74</sup> Other relatives of Stylianos are mentioned in passing, though it is not revealed what offices or titles they held, if any. Some are named as participants in the plot at Damianos's, though the chroniclers differ in the details they report. Theophanes Continuatus says that Stylianos's son Tautzes and 'the others' plotted Leo's death; the Continuator of George the Monk calls the son of Stylianos Tzautzes; Leo Grammaticus says the son of Stylianos was Tzantzes; Skylitzes names Leo the son of Zaoutzes and Christopher ὁ Τζάντζης.<sup>75</sup> With the final destruction of the Zaoutzes family after their plot against the emperor was suppressed in 900 the chronicle tradition cites among the accomplices

<sup>72</sup> *VE*, 19. 26-32.

<sup>73</sup> *TC*, 361; Herlong, *Social Mobility*, 143.

<sup>74</sup> *GMC*, 856, 857-858. Skylitzes, *Scylitzae*, 179. 73, names Basil *epeiktes* as an ἀνεψιός of Zaoutzes. Oikonomidès, *Listes*, 339, describes the *epeiktes* as someone 'qui veille à ce que les chevaux et les bêtes de somme soient bien traités et équipés'.

<sup>75</sup> *TC*, 360; *GMC*, 856; *LG*, 269-270; *Scylitzae*, 178. 59-60. On the family of Stylianos see Herlong, *Social Mobility*, 143.

two other names, John and Stylianos.<sup>76</sup> Stylianos's daughters also should not be forgotten. Zoe became augusta in 898, and if there is any truth in the story of Nikephoros Phokas's fall Stylianos may have had another daughter, unless Zoe's first husband Theodore Gouzouniates was already dead by the time of this marriage proposal. The existence of another daughter is apparent from the fact that Nikolaos the hetaireiarch was Stylianos's son-in-law. Turning to Stylianos's friends there is one striking example, that of Antony Kauleas who became patriarch in 893. It is the *Life of Euthymios* which reveals their association when it relates that upon the death of Stephen 'the fight Zaoutzes put up was beyond description, to advance a creature of his own as patriarch; for he feared lest the emperor propose Euthymios, his familiar, to the Church'.<sup>77</sup> Although the author is careful not to name Stylianos's creature here it seems that he must have been the candidate who was eventually successful, Antony Kauleas; Euthymios may have been *synkellos* but he did not step into Stephen's shoes. The connection between Stylianos and Antony is confirmed by the chronicles, which record that after Stylianos's death he was buried in the monastery of Kauleas.<sup>78</sup> The explanation for their relationship is lacking but perhaps one should see in Stylianos the figure of Antony's mysterious benefactor; sources on Kauleas's life and career relate an incident where a miraculous patron donated to the charitable Antony a vast sum of money with which he performed even greater acts of philanthropy, and thus earned for himself such a reputation that he became an ideal choice for the patriarchal throne.<sup>79</sup> Thus it is clear that Zaoutzes had relatives and friends in high secular and religious offices, but it can be

<sup>76</sup> *GMC*, 859; *LG*, 273.

<sup>77</sup> *VE*, 43. 17-22.

<sup>78</sup> *GMC*, 857. On Kaulcas's monastery see Janin, *Les églises et les monastères*, 39-41. It seems that there also existed a monastery of Zaoutzes, which may have been built by Stylianos's wife: see T. Preger, *Scriptores Originum Constantinopolitanarum*, II (Leipzig, 1907), 289. 1-4. Leo VI delivered orations on churches that had been built by Stylianos and Antony Kauleas, and it is likely that these churches were part of the monastic complexes of these men: see Akakios, *Λόγοι*, 243-248, 274-280; A. Frolow, 'Deux églises byzantines d'après des sermons peu connus de Léon VI le sage', *REB*, 3 (1945), 43-91; Mango, *Sources and Documents*, 202-205; Antonopoulou, *Homilies* (forthcoming).

<sup>79</sup> See the *Synaxarion of Constantinople*, *AASS*, Propylacum Novembris, 461. 1-462. 23; also the *Life of Antony*, ed. A. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, *Monumenta Graeca et Latina ad Historiam Photii Patriarchae Pertinentia*, I (St Petersburg, 1899), 1-25, esp. 11. 16-22. If the story and the conjecture have any worth perhaps Stylianos was transformed into the mysterious back street benefactor so as to prevent Antony being tainted by Stylianos's subsequent evil reputation.

disputed that this made him all-powerful. When the evidence is examined further it is apparent that Stylianos does not seem to have extracted much benefit from the situation. Taking the case of the patriarch first it may come as a surprise that when it came to the marriage of Leo with Stylianos's daughter Zoe Antony was no pliant agent; in fact Kauleas did not bless the couple, and the palace priest who did, Sinapes, was deposed.<sup>80</sup> With regard to Stylianos's relatives, leaving the case of Zoe aside for the moment, it seems that they did not ultimately add to Zaoutzes's power. It might be imagined that they had Leo exactly where they wanted him, with the imperial security offices filled by relatives of the emperor's right-hand man. But in reality there were tensions between Stylianos and his relatives that undermined his own position and reveal their dissatisfaction at the limitations of their power. The fact that plots were hatched against Leo by members of Stylianos's family whilst Zaoutzes was still alive may indicate that they felt that they did not have enough power, that indeed Stylianos was not Leo's master. In the instances of the two plots it is also apparent that Stylianos himself was not directly involved, again indicating that his relatives were discontent with the status quo; perhaps they felt frustrated because Zaoutzes was not making as much of his position as he could have. The impression is gained that Stylianos was indeed loyal to the emperor and had no wish to oust or replace him. Evidence of tension within the family is also reflected in the aftermath of the Damianos plot. Having escaped his planned death Leo replaced the *drugarios* of the watch John with Podaron, the son of Nikolaos the hetaireiarch. It was this Nikolaos, named as a friend of the emperor, who informed Leo of 'all the hidden things' about Stylianos, and after this Zaoutzes and the emperor were temporarily estranged.<sup>81</sup> Now Nikolaos was in fact Stylianos's son-in-law, and Podaron who was Nikolaos's son was thus Stylianos's grandson. The inescapable conclusion is that division existed within the family and Nikolaos wished to increase his standing with Leo at the expense of his father-in-law. From such family connections it would be very difficult to argue that Stylianos was all-powerful. Returning to the instance of Stylianos's daughter Zoe, who was Leo's mistress and then became his wife and *augusta* in 898, it may be expected that her connection with the emperor did give Stylianos a certain measure of power. However although it has already been tentatively proposed that Leo's relationship with Zoe was

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<sup>80</sup> *GMC*, 856-857.

<sup>81</sup> *TC*, 361.

a factor in his attachment to Stylianos, there is no evidence to suggest that it gave Zaoutzes dominion over the emperor. Indeed it is notable that when Zoe did finally marry Leo in 898 Stylianos had already passed the peak of his standing with the emperor; the fact that his daughter became *augusta* does not seem to have altered this situation. This may indicate that Leo was able to view Stylianos objectively despite his passion for Zoe.

In conclusion it can be said that Zaoutzes did become the major secular official under the emperor, but he did not hold this position from the very beginning of Leo's reign. It is doubtful that Basil I left Stylianos as *epitropos* for his heirs; other men were more prominent in Leo's early administration. His standing with the emperor did increase due to a number of factors, such as the disappearance of other officials and perhaps Leo's attachment to his daughter Zoe. Even before the office of *basileiopatōr* was created for him it is clear enough that Stylianos had already become the emperor's right-hand man, for he appears to have attained the rank of *protomagistros*, and was recognised as the leading secular official and to some degree as governor of the empire. As such his position was elevated, but hardly allows for the conclusion that he was all-powerful. Evidence shows that Stylianos was not able to do as he pleased, that he was still obliged to follow the will of the emperor. Incidents indicating Stylianos's abuse of power can be read as later invention with the purpose of exonerating others from censure, and in the case of the *Life of Euthymios* also as part of its purpose to edify. The fact that Stylianos can be found acting in an underhand or corrupt manner also indicates that he was not all-powerful; and like all other magistrates who resorted to bending or breaking the rules he could still be reprimanded and punished by the emperor. His authority was ultimately based on the extent to which Leo valued and trusted him, the degree of which does seem to have declined even before the emperor's marriage to Zoe Zaoutzaina. If the conclusion is accepted that Stylianos was not all-powerful then it is entirely wrong to perceive Leo as weak and indifferent to the administration of his empire. He may have elevated Stylianos to an exceptional magistracy and delegated administration to him but his own authority was never in doubt; as Karlin-Hayter neatly puts it, the emperor 'governed through' Stylianos Zaoutzes.<sup>82</sup> Thus Leo should no longer be permitted to be obscured by the smoke screen of the sinister and powerful Stylianos, but should be recognised as being responsible during the first half of his reign for governmental actions, both good and bad.

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<sup>82</sup> Karlin-Hayter, *VE, Introduction*, 39.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### THE REALITY OF LEO THE WISE

One of the most striking features about the emperor Leo VI was that he was known for his wisdom (*sophia*); indeed no other Byzantine emperor before or after him had such an extensive reputation for this quality. Thus it is curious to find that Byzantinists are continually having to remind themselves that Leo was described as a *sophos* during his own lifetime; Magdalino felt it necessary to reassert that 'Leo was already celebrated in his own day, and not just in posthumous legend, as a ruler of outstanding *sophia*', though Ostrogorsky had previously noted this point.<sup>1</sup> No doubt this tendency is due to the fact that the two studies, by Mango and Irmscher, devoted to Leo the Wise focus attention on the subsequent legendary figure, the miraculous prophet referred to from the twelfth century onwards, rather than on the historical Leo VI<sup>2</sup>; no wonder Magdalino had to restate the emperor's claim to *sophia* given that the objective of Mango's study was 'to trace the stages by which the rather colourless emperor of the Macedonian dynasty became a seer of such enduring fame' and that the conclusion of this study was that the character of Leo the Wise owed more to the person of Leo the Mathematician (also known as the Philosopher) than to the emperor.<sup>3</sup> This chapter highlights instead the reality of Leo VI the wise, showing that the emperor did indeed have the reputation of a *sophos* whilst he lived and aiming to understand why this was so.

That Leo VI was renowned for his wisdom during his reign is clear from those sources that were produced in or shortly after his lifetime. Philotheos attests that Leo was most wise<sup>4</sup>; Arethas's court orations are full of references to Leo's wisdom<sup>5</sup>; Choïrosphaktes in his works

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<sup>1</sup> Magdalino, 'Revisited', 110; Ostrogorsky, *State*, 242.

<sup>2</sup> Mango, 'Legend'; J. Irmscher, 'Die Gestalt Leons VI. des Weisen in Volksage und Historiographie', *Beiträge zur byzantinischen Geschichte im 9.-11. Jahrhundert*, ed. V. Vavrinek (Prague, 1978), 205-224.

<sup>3</sup> Mango, 'Legend', 59, 90-92.

<sup>4</sup> Oikonomidès, *Listes*, 81. 3, 83. 21, 85. 8, 187. 17, 189. 3, 217. 29.

<sup>5</sup> See *ASM*, II, 1-48, esp. 4. 32, 4. 34, 9. 19, 24. 1, 24. 23-24, 24. 27—25.9, 25. 31—26. 1, 37. 6, 37. 25, 41. 18, 46. 15-16, 46. 21. See also Jenkins, Laourdas and Mango, 'Nine Orations', 1-40.

indicates that the emperor was a *sophos*<sup>6</sup>; a correspondent of Choerosphaktes, Prokopios the *spatharios*, labels Leo VI as a wise emperor<sup>7</sup>; in the west at Teano, a residence of the monks of Monte Cassino, the poet Eugenius Vulgarius of Naples alludes to the wisdom of Leo in a commentary on one of the poems he addressed to the emperor<sup>8</sup>; the patriarch Nikolaos observes that God had 'glorified' the emperor 'with wisdom especially'<sup>9</sup>; the *Life of Theophano* refers several times to Leo's *sophia* calling him both *sophos* and *pansophos*, and reveals that his wise rule was divinely ordained<sup>10</sup>; the *Life of Euthymios* records that Euthymios addressed Leo as 'your most wise majesty'<sup>11</sup>; the chronicler known as the Continuator of George the Monk notes that Joseph the hymnographer lived until the reign of Leo the wise<sup>12</sup>; another chronicler, Eutykhios of Alexandria, describes the emperor as a wise man and a philosopher<sup>13</sup>; and naturally enough the *sophia* of Leo VI was fully acknowledged by his son Constantine VII (913-949) and those authors commissioned by him.<sup>14</sup> *Sophia* was certainly a quality that could be possessed by emperors, and had been in recent history. When the Chrysotriklinos was redecorated during the reign of Michael III (842-867) an epigram was produced describing and explaining the new mosaics, and it states that the emperor's deeds are 'filled with wisdom'.<sup>15</sup> Both Michael III and the caesar Bardas are described as possessors of wisdom by Photios in his homily on the inauguration of the palatine church of the Theotokos of the Pharos.<sup>16</sup> Hymns of Photios celebrate the *sophia* of Basil I also<sup>17</sup>, and Leo VI in

<sup>6</sup> See Koliai, *Choerosphaktès*, letter 21, 104-105; Magdalino, 'Revisited', 117.

<sup>7</sup> Koliai, *Choerosphaktès*, letter 19, 96-97.

<sup>8</sup> See H. Bloch, *Monte Cassino in the Middle Ages*, I (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1986), 7-9.

<sup>9</sup> *Nicholas. Letters*, 218. 75-76.

<sup>10</sup> *VT*, 5. 4-5, and 16.14 (for Leo as *sophos*), 7. 5 (for Leo as *pansophos*), 10. 29-30 (for St Demetrios's prediction of Leo's wise rule).

<sup>11</sup> *VE*, 31. 10.

<sup>12</sup> *GMC*, 808.

<sup>13</sup> Vasiliev, *Byzance et les Arabes*, II. 2, 25.

<sup>14</sup> *DAI*, I, 98. 80, 230. 72, 254. 2; *De Cer.*, I, 115. 3, 123. 24-25, 455, 456. 19-20; *De Them.*, I, 31. 2, 35. 5, 59. 21 (*Porphyrogenito*, 73, 76, 96. 35); *VB*, 313. 16, 320. 8., 335.13, 349. 4-5, 352. 19; *Iosephi Genesisi Regum Libri Quattuor*, edd. A. Lesmueller-Werner and H. Thurn, *CFHB* 14 (Berlin, 1978), 3.

<sup>15</sup> See W. R. Paton, *The Greek Anthology*, I (London, 1916), 44-47, csp. 46. 18; see also Z. A. Gavrilović, 'The Humiliation of Leo VI the Wise (the Mosaic of the Narthex at Saint Sophia, Istanbul)', *Cahiers Archéologiques*, 28 (1979), 87-94, csp. 89.

<sup>16</sup> *PG* 102, 565, 573; C. Mango, *The Homilies of Photius Patriarch of Constantinople. Translation, Introduction and Commentary*, *DOS* 3 (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1958), homily 10, 189.

<sup>17</sup> *PG* 102, 577-584.

his *Epitaphios* portrays his father as having *sophia* and being a *sophos*.<sup>18</sup> Yet these instances cannot compete with the sheer quantity of references to the wisdom of Leo himself. Further it is not the bulk of these instances alone that makes Leo's reputation as a *sophos* remarkable, but also the quality of *sophia* itself. Although *sophia* could be ascribed to an emperor when it came to praising the intelligence of a ruler it is clear that the more usual term was *phronesis*, which was laid down in the handbook of Menander as one of the four virtues by which the acts of an emperor were to be categorised.<sup>19</sup> This is strikingly exemplified by the letters of the patriarch Nikolaos which mention the intellect of his addressees, for he uses the term *sophia* extremely rarely, employing instead *phronesis* or even *synesis*; in only one letter does he use the adjective *sophos*, in reference to the Bulgarian Tsar Symeon (who was indeed famed for his wisdom), and this was probably because it was appropriate to a Biblical quote that Nikolaos was including.<sup>20</sup> This thus raises the question of why *sophia* was so emphatically connected with Leo VI. A consideration of the meaning of the term should illuminate the answer.

It is usual to identify two distinct types of *sophia* in Byzantine thought, those of inner and outer wisdom. The outer variety is taken to refer to secular knowledge, whilst the inner to Christian knowledge.<sup>21</sup> This can be seen in the application of the term to people and events in close proximity to, or even of, the reign of Leo VI. *Sophia*, evidently of the inner type, was frequently the possession of those who were religiously enlightened, such as the famed iconophiles like the Graptoi brothers and the empress Eirene.<sup>22</sup> Another example comes from the reign of Leo when the emperor banned the annual procession to the church of St Mokios on Mid-Pentecost after he was nearly

<sup>18</sup> See Vogt and Hausherr, 'Oraison', 46. 20-21, 56. 26-28.

<sup>19</sup> See D. A. Russell and N. G. Wilson, *Menander Rhetor* (Oxford, 1981), 84-85.

<sup>20</sup> *Nicholas. Letters*, 70. 11, 72. 60-61.

<sup>21</sup> See J. Meyendorff, 'Wisdom-Sophia: Contrasting Approaches to a Complex Theme', *DOP*, 41 (1987), 391-401, esp. 391, who observes that Christian authors use the term *sophia* in at least two ways, one to refer to 'the natural wisdom of the universe, which preoccupied the Greek philosophers', and the other for 'the personalized and "true" Wisdom revealed in Christ'. See also Treadgold, 'Macedonian Renaissance', 76.

<sup>22</sup> For the wisdom of the Graptoi see M. B. Cunningham, *Life of Michael the Synkellos. Text, Translation and Commentary*, *BBTT* 1 (Belfast, 1991), 52-55, esp. 52. 29-54. 5 where it is stated that the patriarch of Jerusalem 'often summoned them [the Graptoi] so that he might benefit from their conversation and discussion about the divine scriptures. Listening to the torrent of their all-wise (πανσόφου) teaching...he was delighted and rejoiced greatly in spirit, praising God the merciful for having revealed such luminaries in his days'. For the wisdom of Eirene see *Theophanis Chronographia*, I, ed. C. de Boor (New York, 1980), 477. 32.

killed there in 903; the *oikonomos* of the church, named as Mark the most wise (ὁ σοφώτατος) monk, protested about the emperor's ruling, but when Leo remained unmoved Mark predicted that the emperor would die ten years to the day on the anniversary of the attempted regicide, a prediction that was fulfilled.<sup>23</sup> It seems certain that Mark was most wise in the inner sense, for he had the divine gift of foresight, a trait often found in Byzantine monks.<sup>24</sup> Turning to outer wisdom famous exponents of this quality were Leo the Mathematician and Photios.<sup>25</sup> Leo the Mathematician was renowned for his learning, both literary and scientific, and the latter particularly made him appear wondrous to his contemporaries.<sup>26</sup> He was placed by Bardas at the head of the school that was established in the palace building of the Magnaura, a school that specialised in the teaching of outer wisdom, its subjects being named as philosophy, geometry, grammar and astronomy.<sup>27</sup> Photios was also well known, if not infamous, for his learning. Niketas David fully acknowledged his outer wisdom, observing that 'he was so steeped in grammar and poetry, rhetoric and philosophy, and even medicine, and very nearly all secular learning, that he was thought not only to surpass all men in his own day but also able to rival the ancients'.<sup>28</sup> Such was Photios's reputation for wisdom that Basil I made him tutor to his children.<sup>29</sup> It seems that the Graptoi can also be described as men of outer wisdom, since their tutor Michael 'taught them grammar, philosophy, and a number of works of poetry so that in a short time the all-holy brothers were proclaimed supremely wise (πανσόφους)'.<sup>30</sup> Thus it was evidently possible for Byzantines to be wise in more ways than one, but is it really the case that they could only be wise in two ways, as possessors of secular and Christian knowledge? Is the simple dichotomy of inner and outer wisdom sufficient to convey what Byzantines meant by *sophia*? Certainly as regards Leo VI most Byzantinists have been content to ascribe his reputation as a *sophos* to the fact that he was a prolific author, and thus an exponent of outer wisdom. Mango asserts

<sup>23</sup> *GMC*, 862.

<sup>24</sup> See P. Charanis, 'The Monk as an Element of Byzantine Society', *DOP*, 25 (1971), 61-84, esp. 75.

<sup>25</sup> For these two intellectuals see Lemerle, *Humanism*, 171-235.

<sup>26</sup> See *TC*, 185-192.

<sup>27</sup> See *TC*, 185, 192; *Iosephi Genesisii*, 69-70.

<sup>28</sup> See *PG* 105, 509. The translation quoted comes from Lemerle, *Humanism*, 234. Niketas however also notes that Photios did not possess true wisdom, that which comes from Christianity.

<sup>29</sup> *TC*, 276-277.

<sup>30</sup> Cunningham, *Michael the Synkellos*, 52. 25-27.

that Leo earned his epithet 'on account of his erudition and literary works', a view commonly found amongst Byzantinists.<sup>31</sup> Karlin-Hayter supported this view, but she was also willing to incorporate other explanations.<sup>32</sup> She was able to countenance what Mango could not, that Leo VI had indeed acquired the status of a prophet in or shortly after his lifetime, but this still keeps his wisdom within the bounds of the inner and outer categories; Leo the Mathematician seemed to have the gift of foreknowledge simply by virtue of his grounding in science, just as Mark the monk did through divine inspiration. Yet Karlin-Hayter does further the basic division by her observation that Leo was wise due to his practical talents as a ruler, 'in particular law-giving and organising and co-ordinating the war-effort'. This comment prompts the notion that wisdom could be an especial quality found in rulers, and indeed the concept of the wise king has been examined by Kalugila, who traced the idea from the kings of Egypt through to Old Testament figures.<sup>33</sup> He concluded that royal wisdom did incorporate many aspects, including the foreknowledge of God, the fear of God, the ability to interpret dreams, literary wisdom, judicial wisdom, and practical wisdom such as building and ruling well.<sup>34</sup> It may be wondered if such ideas were still current in the Byzantine empire, but given that its ideology was based on Christian and Roman concepts which themselves had their origin in the thought-world that Kalugila describes it must be strongly suspected that such factors would not have been alien to ninth-century Byzantium.<sup>35</sup> Thus when Byzantines refer to the *sophia* of the emperor Leo VI they may be indicating more than his secular or Christian knowledge, but could be alluding to a whole range of traditional imperial roles. It seems then sensible to examine what the Byzantines did have to say about the emperor's *sophia*.

Yet there is a problem. Although there is ample testimony that Leo VI was called a *sophos* the majority of the sources do not explain what they mean by describing him so; why should they when they knew perfectly well themselves what they meant? A few do elaborate upon the theme and it is clear that they have the learning of the emperor in

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<sup>31</sup> Mango, 'Legend', 68. See also Irmscher, 'Gestalt', 210; Ostrogorsky, *State*, 242; Jenkins, *Imperial Centuries*, 198; Vogt, 'Jeunesse', 404; Lemerle, *Humanism*, 239.

<sup>32</sup> For her analysis of the wisdom of Leo see *VE, Commentary*, 155.

<sup>33</sup> L. Kalugila, *The Wise King. Studies in Royal Wisdom as Divine Revelation in the Old Testament and its Environment* (Uppsala, 1980).

<sup>34</sup> Kalugila, *Wise King*, 132.

<sup>35</sup> For the origins of Byzantine political thought see F. Dvornik, *Early Christian and Byzantine Political Philosophy. Origins and Background*, 2 vols, DOS 9 (Washington DC, 1966).

mind. Philotheos comments that Leo happens to be an emperor that is neither ignorant (ἀμαθειῖ) nor lacking in wisdom (ἄσοφω) but in fact most wise (σοφωτάτω) and favoured by the grace of heaven in his thoughts (λόγω).<sup>36</sup> Several of Arethas's court orations make it plain that the emperor was a man of literary tastes and talents. At the start of one oration Arethas expresses reluctance to speak before Leo as he will appear boorish contrasted to the emperor's enormous wisdom (μεγάλη τῆς σοφίας ἀβύσσω).<sup>37</sup> In another Arethas states that the emperor is so informative that it is no longer necessary to buy books.<sup>38</sup> Such comments do indicate that Leo's learning was connected with his reputation as a *sophos*; his literary endeavours are well known, even if they have not all been preserved. The emperor was wont to write and deliver sermons and speeches for occasions such as regular church feasts and the dedication days of new or rebuilt churches. A collection of these homilies has been preserved, but it is clear that it represents only a part of the emperor's output.<sup>39</sup> Leo also composed military manuals.<sup>40</sup> It appears that he completed his father's revision of the Justinianic code, the *Basilika*, and he produced his own volume of new laws, the *Novels*. It is likely that the *Book of the Eparch* was also drawn up by this emperor.<sup>41</sup> Leo was a keen hymnographer too, and some of these hymns have survived, whilst the existence of others is known only from references to them in the sources.<sup>42</sup> In addition he

<sup>36</sup> Oikonomidès, *Listes*, 85. 6-8.

<sup>37</sup> *ASM*, II, 24. 1.

<sup>38</sup> *ASM*, II, 46. 23-25.

<sup>39</sup> See Akakios, *Λόγοι*; *PG* 107, 1-298; Grosdidier de Matons, 'Trois études', 181-207; Vogt and Hausherr, 'Oraison'; Frolow, 'Deux églises'; Mango, *Sources and Documents*, 202-205; P. Devos, 'La translation de s. Jean Chrysostome BHG 877h: une oeuvre de l'empereur Léon VI', *AB*, 107 (1989), 5-29; Antonopoulou, *Homilies*; D. Serruys, 'Les homélies de Léon le sage', *BZ* 12 (1903), 167-170. It is clear that Leo did write other speeches that have not been preserved: see *GMC*, 862, 866, 870; *ASM*, II, 15. 1-5. Perhaps the collection of homilies that has been preserved has its origins in the gift of his own writings that Leo gave to Euthymios in 900: see *VE*, 51. 14-18.

<sup>40</sup> See Chapter Seven.

<sup>41</sup> See J. Koder, *Das Eparchenbuch Leons des Weisen*, *CFHB* 33 (Vienna, 1991).

<sup>42</sup> See H. J. W. Tillyard, 'ΕΘΘΙΝΑ ΑΝΑΣΤΑΣΙΜΑ. The Morning Hymns of the Emperor Leo', *ABSA*, 30 (1932), 86-108; 31 (1933), 115-147; E. Wellesz, *A History of Byzantine Music and Hymnography*, second edition (Oxford, 1961), esp. 237, 244. Philotheos says that Leo wrote a hymn for the feast of Epiphany: see Oikonomidès, *Listes*, 186-189. Arethas records that Leo had composed a hymn for the procession of the relics of Lazaros through Constantinople to Hagia Sophia, and also that after the deposition of the relics in the church the emperor judges a hymn-singing contest there: see *ASM*, II, 14. 6-7, 15. 29-16. 6. It is related in the *Book of Ceremonies* that Leo wrote a hymn for the feast of Elijah and also one for that of St Demetrios: see *De Cer.*, 114. 22-115. 3, 123. 22-25.

composed poems, though those that are securely connected with him do not seem to have been preserved.<sup>43</sup> A book of spiritual advice to a monastic community, probably that of Leo's spiritual father Euthymios at Psamathia, appears to have been a work of the emperor.<sup>44</sup> Like Leo the Mathematician Leo VI was known for his interest and skill in astronomy.<sup>45</sup> Several of the sources refer to the emperor's love of and activity in the field of learning in a more general way. In the *Life of Blasios* it is related that when this saint returned to Constantinople after a long absence in Rome he was taken to the palace to meet the emperor, whom he accidentally found, busy at his customary activity of writing (καλλιγραφῶν).<sup>46</sup> In his letters from exile Choerosphaktes asserts that Leo both loves learning and loves to listen (φιλολόγων καὶ φιλακροαμῶνων), and he clearly hoped that the emperor would be so delighted with his Atticisms that he would be restored to freedom.<sup>47</sup> One of the poems written in 913 about the death of Leo states that the emperor was 'of eloquence the shining light' (ἐν λόγοις φέγγος ἄδυτον), that his 'sermon's (τῶν λόγων) copious flow is like the vastness of the ocean', and that 'the hymns that issue from [his] lyre are drops of sweetest honey'.<sup>48</sup> Leo's interest in Niketas David was as much to do with this man's literary talents as his political opposition to the emperor, and it is alleged that he wished to exploit his skills by appointing him as a teacher of philosophy, or failing that as a teacher of rhetoric.<sup>49</sup> Thus the overwhelming impression to be gained from the Byzantines themselves is that Leo

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<sup>43</sup> The emperor wrote verses on the fall of Thessalonike, the rebel Andronikos Doukas and his brother Alexander: see P. Maas, 'Literarisches zu der Vita Euthymii', *BZ*, 21 (1912), 436-440, esp. 436-437. *VE*, 81. 30-32, reveals that Leo also wrote a poem about his son Constantine. A mass of other verses exist bearing the name of Leo the Wise, but it is uncertain whether this indicates Leo VI: see Irmischer, 'Gestalt', 210.

<sup>44</sup> A. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, *Varia Graeca Sacra Subsidia Byzantina Lucis Ope Iterata*, VI (Leipzig, 1975), 213-253. On the work see Grosdidier de Matons, 'Trois études', 206-228.

<sup>45</sup> Symeon of Bulgaria acknowledges the emperor's renown as an astronomer in his correspondence with the diplomat Choerosphaktes: see Kolias, *Choerosphactès*, letters 1 and 3. Choerosphaktes himself also indicates that Leo VI had knowledge of the stars in his poem on the emperor's bath: see Magdalino, 'Bath', 239. In the light of these testimonies Leo's own comments on astrology in his *Taktika* take on greater significance: see *PG* 107, 1092, Epilogue, 67.

<sup>46</sup> See *AASS*, Nov IV, 666; Grégoire, 'Acta Sanctorum', 806-807.

<sup>47</sup> See Kolias, *Choerosphactès*, letter 21, 107. 117-118, and letter 22, 109. 3-4.

<sup>48</sup> See Ševčenko, 'Poems', 201-204.

<sup>49</sup> See *VE*, 105. 17-21; Flusin, 'Fragment', I, 125. 38-40; Westerink, 'Nicetas the Paphlagonian', 358. The offer of these teaching posts indicates that the school established by Bardas at the Magnaura was still functioning in the reign of Leo VI.

was a *sophos* because of his writings and love of learning. Yet it would be wrong to leave the analysis here; not only do a few authors indicate that other types of wisdom are applicable to Leo, but the examples of his erudition themselves can be broken down into different categories.

It is Arethas who indicates that Leo can be viewed as wise in the inner sense or, alternatively, in that he showed knowledge and fear of God. Several times in his orations Arethas calls the emperor *theosophos*, wise in the things of God or God-wise. The God-wise Leo is urged to encourage the new patriarch Nikolaos in his task<sup>50</sup>; the emperor's action of bringing the relics of Lazaros to Constantinople is characterised as *theosophos*<sup>51</sup>; Leo's wisdom is connected with his Christian way of life when Arethas comments that his dinner guests are intoxicated through the bowl of wisdom and the lessons of piety of the emperor<sup>52</sup>; Leo is described as being full of the wisdom and grace of God.<sup>53</sup> Certainly both Leo's religious writings and role in religious matters do give him the aspect of a man of God endowed with divine wisdom. He set himself up as a church orator, augmented feasts with his own hymns, and took it upon himself to advise a monastic community on spiritual life. His dominant role in church affairs is infamous; he deposed Photios and Nikolaos, appointed his young brother to the patriarchate, legislated in matters that were the proper sphere of the synod, banned the procession to the church of St Mokios on the feast of Mid-Pentecost, married four times, recognised the sanctity of one wife and buried another at Easter.<sup>54</sup> He also presided over a church union, and ended a drought through direct intercession with God.<sup>55</sup> And although the author of the presumed *Life of Niketas David* may be accused of being virulently anti-Leo he was surely not distorting reality greatly when he portrayed the emperor as considering himself as the intercessor for his people with God.<sup>56</sup>

But not only must such Christian wisdom be ascribed to the em-

<sup>50</sup> *ASM*, II, 4. 32.

<sup>51</sup> *ASM*, II, 9. 19.

<sup>52</sup> *ASM*, II, 25. 31—26. 1.

<sup>53</sup> *ASM*, II, 46. 15-16.

<sup>54</sup> On Leo's strong-arm attitude in religious affairs see Magdalino, 'Revisited', 114; Schminck, 'Rota'.

<sup>55</sup> For the union see Karlin-Hayter, *VE, Commentary*, 184-188; Dvornik, *Photian Schism*, 265-271; Grumel, 'Chronologie', 6-8, 13-17; Grégoire, 'Études sur le neuvième siècle', 540-550. For his part in ending the drought see *ASM*, II, 28. 13—29. 7; Jenkins, Laourdas and Mango, 'Nine Orations', 12, 14.

<sup>56</sup> Flusin, 'Fragment', I, 125. 43-45. It is related that the emperor asked Niketas 'Do you wish to find salvation without my majesty, my prayer or mediation?'

peror so too should practical wisdom, as Karlin-Hayter realised. However there is no need to turn to later authors such as Niketas *magistros* for testimony of this fact, for Philotheos himself points to this conclusion when he states that the emperor was most wise in deed (ἔργῳ) as well as in thought (λόγῳ).<sup>57</sup> Choiosphaktes also indicates the emperor's practical involvement in state affairs, asserting that during his career as an ambassador he had always benefited from Leo's personal advice.<sup>58</sup> The internal organisation that Jenkins noted as being such a feature of Leo's reign would certainly earn him the right to be seen as a ruler of practical wisdom<sup>59</sup>, and it is obvious that a great deal of the emperor's writings fall into this sphere, such as his military manuals, his juridical works and other guide books.<sup>60</sup> Whether Leo's building activities<sup>61</sup> were seen as an expression of his *sophia* is harder to say, since so little detailed testimony touching upon this subject has remained, but it can be observed that Choiosphaktes's poem on the opening of the emperor's bath-house makes Leo's wisdom a major theme.<sup>62</sup>

Thus far it has been seen that many of the categories identified by Kalugila as elements of royal wisdom are applicable to Leo VI, and it can be added that he certainly possessed judicial wisdom by virtue of his prescriptive works. There remains only the talent of being able to interpret dreams, but Leo seems to be disqualified here since there is no evidence of him doing this. Perhaps though Kalugila has been too

<sup>57</sup> Oikonomidès, *Listes*, 85. 8.

<sup>58</sup> Koliás, *Choerosphactès*, letter 25, 127. 93-94.

<sup>59</sup> Jenkins, *Imperial Centuries*, 201, 207-208.

<sup>60</sup> It is appropriate to mention here the analysis of Constantine VII's *De Administrando Imperio* and his character as an imperial savant by Beaud, 'Le savoir et le monarque'. Beaud highlights the connection between intellectual wisdom and practical wisdom, and argues that Constantine VII marked the culmination of a concept amongst the Macedonian emperors whereby 'compétence savante' was an integral part of imperial legitimacy, both personally and dynastically. Thus Leo's reputation for wisdom in all its forms can be seen as part of this supposed process. On this theory see also Patlagean, 'Civilisation'.

<sup>61</sup> Leo seems mainly to have been a builder of churches and monasteries: see *GMC*, 850, 860, 870; *VE*, chaps. 4-6; Akakios, *Λόγοι*, 137-139; *VB*, 335; *TC*, 146; *AASS*, Nov III, 884. See also Mango, *Sources and Documents*, 205-206; G. Downey, 'The Church of All Saints (Church of St Theophano) near the Church of the Holy Apostles at Constantinople', *DOP*, 9-10 (1955-56), 301-305. For St Lazaros see Janin, *Les églises et les monastères*, 298-300. One wonders if the churches for which Leo wrote dedication speeches were also commissioned by him: see *GMC*, 862, 866; Akakios, *Λόγοι*, 243-248, 274-280. See also Frolow, 'Deux églises'; T. Macridy with A. H. S. Megaw, C. Mango and E. J. W. Hawkins, 'The Monastery of Lips (Fenari Isa Camii) at Istanbul', *DOP*, 18 (1964), 249-316; Mango, *Sources and Documents*, 202-205.

<sup>62</sup> See Magdalino, 'Revisited', 104.

rigid in his definition and the category could rather be understood to be that of miraculous ability, including the gift of prophecy. Such a talent is indeed found in the character of Leo the Wise, but Mango disassociated Leo the wise from this figure, concluding emphatically that 'Leo VI was neither a prophet nor a magician'.<sup>63</sup> However Karlin-Hayter was more open to the possibility, citing the *Life of Antony Kauleas* which states frankly that Leo could estimate what would happen in the future, but unfortunately this text may date to a much later period when the legend of Leo the Wise had developed. Yet Magdalino also considers the possibility that there was more to the wisdom of Leo VI than meets the eye of most Byzantinists; he comments that Choirosphaktes's poem on the bath-house 'suggests that his [Leo VI's] later reputation as "Leo the Wise", a wizard of extraordinary powers, was based on something more than his unremarkable literary achievements, and an ignorant confusion between him and Leo the Mathematician'.<sup>64</sup> It seems appropriate then to investigate whether prophetic ability can be counted as an element in the wisdom of Leo VI.

Mango is correct when he observes that the official pronouncements of Leo VI upon the subject of magic and divination are severe, citing *Novel 45* and the *Taktika*.<sup>65</sup> Yet he did not point out that in the *Taktika* Leo also advises his generals to cynically exploit signs, symbols and scientific skill to encourage their troops. Signs prefiguring victory are to be invented<sup>66</sup>; signs and symbols that scare the soldiers are to be reinterpreted favourably<sup>67</sup>; scientific expertise, like the knowledge of when stars are to appear, is to be exploited to make predictions to convince the army of divine favour<sup>68</sup>; dreams that promise help from God can be made up<sup>69</sup>; symbols, augury and dreams can be used in pretence to encourage the troops<sup>70</sup>; astronomy is an essential skill for a general, and can be used to convince the troops that he can tell the future.<sup>71</sup> It is also interesting to note that Leo makes it plain that it was the business of a general (and presumably even more so of an emperor) in a very real sense to be able to predict the future; he needed the ability to foresee what was going to happen.<sup>72</sup> Thus al-

<sup>63</sup> Mango, 'Legend', 70.

<sup>64</sup> Magdalino, 'Bath', 239.

<sup>65</sup> Mango, 'Legend', 68.

<sup>66</sup> *PG* 107, 885, 14. 116.

<sup>67</sup> *PG* 107, 1033, 20. 78.

<sup>68</sup> *PG* 107, 1049, 20. 141.

<sup>69</sup> *PG* 107, 1053, 20. 149, 1061, 20. 179.

<sup>70</sup> *PG* 107, 1072, 20. 213.

<sup>71</sup> *PG* 107, 1088, Epilogue, 53, 1090, Epilogue, 61.

<sup>72</sup> *PG* 107, 1044, 20. 117, 1084, Epilogue, 36.

though Leo took the stance of frowning upon magical and prophetic practices it is clear that he would not have been above pretending to have such talents. Furthermore, as Mango rightly points out, there is no need to believe that 'Leo himself adhered too strictly to the letter of his pronouncements', citing the case recorded in the chronicles where the emperor consults the metropolitan Pantaleon of Synada about the portent of the lunar eclipse of 908.<sup>73</sup> In addition to this the chronicles contain two episodes in which the emperor is seen to have the power of prediction. The first occurs in relation to Constantine Doukas, when he had just returned from his defection to the Arabs. Leo received Constantine and his colleagues warmly and gladly in the Chrysotriklinos, but just before Constantine departed from the throne room the emperor uttered a grave warning, swearing it upon an icon of Christ; he advised Constantine not to try to seize imperial power for if he did his severed head would be brought through the doors of the Chrysotriklinos.<sup>74</sup> This prophecy came true in 913 at the time of Constantine's attempted coup after the death of Alexander. The emperor's other prediction concerned his brother; as Leo lay dying he saw Alexander approaching and commented 'Behold the evil time of thirteen months', which transpired to be a prophecy, for Alexander did indeed reign for only thirteen months before his death in 913.<sup>75</sup> For Mango neither of these instances was sufficient to prove that Leo VI was a known prophet, but he only explains this deduction with respect to the case of Alexander, asserting that 'Leo was in fact not prophesying' but 'merely quoting a proverb' which was applicable 'to persons of a perverse or evil character'.<sup>76</sup> Yet by indicating that Leo could have passed such a comment upon his brother in 912 Mango in fact strengthens the argument that Leo VI could have been believed to have had prophetic powers, for the casual proverb proved to be stunningly true. As for Constantine Doukas it seems quite likely that Leo would have issued a warning about his future conduct after his return from Bagdad, which then acquired greater significance later. What is most striking about both prophecies is that they were probably in circulation in 913, the year after that of Leo's death; it was in 913 that Alexander died after his thirteen month reign and that Constantine Doukas was decapitated whilst attempting to take power.

As far as Mango was concerned the above two cases are the only known instances of Leo's gift of prophecy, yet there are other epi-

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<sup>73</sup> Mango, 'Legend', 68.

<sup>74</sup> *GMC*, 869-870.

<sup>75</sup> *GMC*, 871.

<sup>76</sup> Mango, 'Legend', 69.

sodes that have potential relevance. One instance is the case of the monastery that the emperor wished to build for his spiritual father Euthymios. As a location for the monastery Leo picked a site on the property of the exiled Leo Katakalon where a church dedicated to Kosmas and Damian already stood. The emperor took Euthymios to view this location, and when the monk entered the pre-existing church he saw in the apse an inscription saying 'The latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former, saith the Lord of hosts'. At this Euthymios was delighted and went out to Leo and exclaimed "It is right, sire to obey your orders and receive your decisions as emanating from the will and providence of God. For the king's heart is in the hand of God".<sup>77</sup> From this episode it emerges that Leo could appear miraculous in that his action was divinely ordained. Another instance not noted by Mango concerns St Blasios, the monk who returned to Constantinople in the reign of Leo, having been absent in Rome for eighteen years. Soon after his arrival in the city he was granted an audience with the emperor, who confessed to him that "Christ showed me your angelic form three years ago".<sup>78</sup> Ultimately however the evidence of these two episodes and the other two above hardly constitute proof that during his own lifetime Leo was known as an exceptional prophet. First as far as can be gauged these four instances were only in circulation after Leo VI had died, and second the gift of prophecy was not an unusual one in Byzantium, as a glance through chronicles and lives of saints reveals. However there remain two contemporaries of the emperor who do attest that he did predict the future during his reign, and that he could be portrayed as the possessor of supernatural powers.

These contemporaries are Symeon of Bulgaria and Leo Choerosphaktes. The evidence comes from the letters that the two men wrote to each other during Choerosphaktes's diplomatic mission of 896.<sup>79</sup> In one letter Symeon reveals that in the recent past the emperor had amazed the Bulgarians by accurately predicting to them the exact time when a solar eclipse would occur, but furthermore he proceeds to challenge the emperor to predict the fate of the Byzantine prisoners that the Bulgarians were holding captive.<sup>80</sup> Mango was aware of this fact, but he did not draw out its full import, merely commenting that Symeon 'was either being jocular or betraying his native supersti-

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<sup>77</sup> For this episode see *VE*, 24-29, esp. 29. 3-5.

<sup>78</sup> *AASS*, Nov IV, 666.

<sup>79</sup> For these letters see Kolias, *Choerosphactès*, letters 1-4.

<sup>80</sup> Kolias, *Choerosphactès*, 76-77.

tion'.<sup>81</sup> What Mango did not reveal was that the emperor did respond to the challenge through his diplomat, prophesying that the prisoners would be released, which did indeed come to pass.<sup>82</sup> Further, Choerosphaktes is adamant that the emperor did have divinatory power, and even calls him a prophet.<sup>83</sup> Choerosphaktes adds to this impression that Leo had special powers in his poem concerning the emperor's bath-house; the details of the bath he describes indicate that it was 'a monument to the wisdom of an emperor with supernatural powers over the created world', and his own comments reveal that the emperor was 'a *sophos* who "surpassed the imagination of Daedalus"...could read the stars...and invited comparison with other eminent masters of the "outer" wisdom'.<sup>84</sup> Thus not only can it be argued that the emperor's contemporary reputation for *sophia* could reflect an element of prophetic ability, but also that the subsequent legend of Leo the Wise does owe as much to Leo VI as it does to either Leo the Mathematician or Leo Choerosphaktes.<sup>85</sup>

However the study of Leo's reputation as a *sophos* does not end here for there are further evocations of *sophia* beyond those already identified. One of these was the Platonic concept of the ideal philosopher king, which Arethas did indeed hail the emperor as in one of his court orations.<sup>86</sup> Another connotation remains, one that can be argued to have been the most fundamental element of Leo's epithet, for it provides the key to understanding the origin of his reputation and why it was so intense<sup>87</sup>; quite simply Leo was deliberately cast as a *sophos* as he was meant to be a new Solomon.<sup>88</sup>

Solomon, the son and successor of David the God-chosen king, was the archetypal wise king of the Old Testament.<sup>89</sup> His wisdom was a gift from God<sup>90</sup>, and found expression in his talents as a judge, a temple builder, a writer of songs and proverbs, a king who had encyclopaedic knowledge of the natural world. His wisdom was also revealed by his role as a prophet and a priest-figure, for he spoke

<sup>81</sup> Mango, 'Legend', 69.

<sup>82</sup> Kolias, *Choerosphactès*, 76-77.

<sup>83</sup> Kolias, *Choerosphactès*, 80-81.

<sup>84</sup> See Magdalino, 'Revisited', 116, 'Bath', 239.

<sup>85</sup> See Magdalino, 'Bath', 239 and n. 47; Mango, 'Legend', 92-93; Kolias, *Choerosphactès*, 65.

<sup>86</sup> *ASM*, II, oration 5, 24. 27-25. 9; Jenkins, Laourdas and Mango, 'Nine Orations', 3, 12. See also Dvornik, *Byzantine Political Philosophy*, II, 357.

<sup>87</sup> See also however the theory of Beaud, 'Le savoir et le monarque'.

<sup>88</sup> See S. F. Tougher, 'The Wisdom of Leo VI', *New Constantines*, 171-179, of which this chapter is an expansion.

<sup>89</sup> For an analysis of Solomon's wisdom see Kalugila, *Wise King*, 106-122.

<sup>90</sup> Third Kings, 4. 29, 5. 12.

directly with God, not through a mediator as David and Saul had done, and he officiated at the dedication of his temple. Such was his fame for wisdom that foreigners flocked to his court to behold him. His reign was also distinguished by fabulous wealth and peace. Solomon thus presided over the Golden Age of the Jewish kingdom. As Dvornik has shown, it is clear that from the moment Constantine the Great (306-337) favoured Christianity Old Testament characters, including Solomon, became suitable fodder as comparisons and models for emperors.<sup>91</sup> A famous example is that of the emperor Heraclius (610-641), who appears to have been intent on establishing himself as a new David.<sup>92</sup> As for Solomon, he most often crops up in comparison to Byzantine emperors in the sphere of church building. It is well known that when Justinian I (527-565) entered the completed church of Hagia Sophia he is alleged to have crowed 'Solomon, I have outdone thee'.<sup>93</sup> But even if this is an apocryphal tale it is evident from sources that are contemporary with Justinian's reign that the notion of surpassing Solomon's building achievement was current.<sup>94</sup> Justinian's desire to triumph over the wise king may even have been inspired by the recent completion of another church, that of St Polyeuktos. This had been commissioned by Anicia Juliana, a woman of imperial blood and a potential rival to Justinian, and an epigram put up in the church said of her that 'she surpassed the wisdom of renowned Solomon by raising a habitation for God'.<sup>95</sup> Harrison even suggested that the very dimensions of Anicia Juliana's church were taken from those of Solomon's temple.<sup>96</sup> This type of synkrisis can

<sup>91</sup> See Dvornik, *Byzantine Political Philosophy*, II, 644-645.

<sup>92</sup> For Heraclius's interest in David see S. Spain Alexander, 'Heraclius, Byzantine Imperial Ideology, and the David Plates', *Speculum*, 52 (1977), 217-237.

<sup>93</sup> G. Dagron, *Constantinople imaginaire. Études sur le recueil des Patria* (Paris, 1984), chaps. 5 and 6.

<sup>94</sup> See for instance Romanos's *On Earthquakes and Fires* in M. Carpenter, *Kontakia of Romanos, Byzantine Melodist, II* (Columbia, 1973), 237-248; the Constantinopolitan kontakion translated in A. Palmer and L. Rodley, 'The Inauguration Anthem of Hagia Sophia in Edessa: A New Edition and Translation with Historical and Architectural Notes and a Comparison with a Contemporary Constantinopolitan Kontakion', *BMGS*, 12 (1988), 117-167. See also A. Cameron, *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire. The Development of Christian Discourse* (California, 1991), 204.

<sup>95</sup> See R. M. Harrison, 'The Church of St. Polyeuktos in Istanbul and the Temple of Solomon', *Okeanos—Essays for Ihor Ševčenko*, edd. C. Mango, O. Pritsak, with U. M. Pasicznyk, *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, 7 (1983), 276-279; C. Mango and I. Ševčenko, 'Remains of the Church of St. Polyeuktos at Constantinople', *DOP*, 15 (1961), 243-247; *Greek Anthology*, I, 7-11.

<sup>96</sup> R. Harrison, *A Temple for Byzantium* (London, 1989). However see C. Milner, 'The Image of the Rightful Ruler: Anicia Juliana's Constantine Mosaic in the Church of Hagios Polyeuktos', *New Constantines*, 73-81, who stresses rather the importance of the example of the temple of Ezekiel.

also be found in use not long before Leo VI came to power, in the reign of Michael III. Photios commented during his dedication speech at the inauguration of Michael's palace church of the Theotokos of the Pharos that this building surpassed the temple of Solomon.<sup>97</sup> In addition to his building skills Solomon's connection with law and judgement also made him a useful model for Byzantine emperors, as can be seen in the prooimion of the *Ecloga* of Leo III (717-741).<sup>98</sup> But not only was Solomon an abstract element in political philosophy he was also a tangible presence in Byzantium. During the reign of Justinian I objects reputedly from the temple of Solomon passed through Constantinople via Carthage after Belisarius's victory over the Vandals in 534<sup>99</sup>, and although Procopius states that these items were sent back to Jerusalem it seems that some of them could have remained in the imperial city or returned there at a later date, for a ninth-century source records that there was a chalice of Solomon kept in Hagia Sophia, whilst a tenth-century source asserts that in the same church there was a golden table of Solomon.<sup>100</sup> One of the most intriguing Solomonic objects kept at Constantinople was the throne of Solomon, which is named only by the *Book of Ceremonies*.<sup>101</sup> This throne was located in the great triklinos of the Magnaura, where the emperor received foreign envoys, and seems to have incorporated mechanical objects such as a tree, singing birds, roaring lions and moving beasts.<sup>102</sup> Whether the throne was believed to be the throne of Solomon that is described in the Old Testament, or was just in-

<sup>97</sup> See Mango, *Homilies of Photius*, 188; R. J. H. Jenkins and C. A. Mango, 'The Date and Significance of the Tenth Homily of Photius', *DOP*, 9-10 (1955-56), 125-140, repr. Jenkins, *Studies on*, II.

<sup>98</sup> See *Ecloga. Das Gesetzbuch Leons III. und Konstantinos' V*, ed. L. Burgmann (Frankfurt, 1983), 164. 66, 164. 80. S. Gero, *Byzantine Iconoclasm during the Reign of Leo III* (Louvain, 1973), 57, comments that 'The author of this law code saw himself...as a second Solomon in his judgement seat'.

<sup>99</sup> H. B. Dewing, *Procopius*, II (London, 1916), 280. 5-9. The objects had come to be in Carthage after the Vandal assault on Rome, where the items had been kept since Titus's sack of Jerusalem.

<sup>100</sup> For the chalice see I. Ševčenko, 'The Greek Source of the Inscription on Solomon's Chalice in the *Vita Constantini*', *To Honor Roman Jakobson*, III (Paris, 1967), 1806-1817. For the table see A. A. Vasiliev, 'Harun-Ibn-Yahya and his Description of Constantinople', *SK*, 5 (1932), 149-163, esp. 157. Three other tables are mentioned, those of David, Korah and Constantine the Great.

<sup>101</sup> *De Cer.*, 566-567, 570.

<sup>102</sup> For the throne see G. Brett, 'The Automata in the Byzantine "Throne of Solomon"', *Speculum*, 29 (1954), 477-487. This throne appears to be the one that Liudprand of Cremona saw Constantine VII upon when he visited Constantinople in 949: see *Werke*, 154. 5-155. 15.

spired by it, is unclear.<sup>103</sup> Problematic also is how long this throne had been located in the Magnaura and which emperor had put it there<sup>104</sup>, but what is obvious is that the emperor who sat on this throne and received his guests was deliberately taking on the role of Solomon.

One emperor who was particularly interested in and connected with Old Testament figures was Leo VI's own father Basil I, as Magdalino has observed.<sup>105</sup> Under Basil the prophet Elijah was established as the heavenly patron of the Macedonian dynasty, whilst a letter to Photios during his first period of exile requested commentary on three passages from the *Book of Kings* concerning Saul, the anointing of David, and the wisdom of Solomon. Solomon's judicial fame was acknowledged during the reign, for he appears in the prooimion of the *Procheiron*, and the scene of the judgement of Solomon was included in the illuminated manuscript of the homilies of Gregory of Nazianzus, where the king is depicted 'as a model of wisdom and justice'.<sup>106</sup> Further Basil is said to have placed a customised statue of Solomon in the foundations of his New Church.<sup>107</sup> Thus Basil had an

<sup>103</sup> For the Biblical throne see First Kings, 10-20. It was inlaid with ivory and overlaid with fine gold; it had six steps; its back had a rounded top; on both sides of the seat were arm-rests, with a lion standing beside each of them; twelve lions stood on the six steps, one at either end of each step.

<sup>104</sup> Brett, 'Automata', 487. It is well known that the emperor Theophilus (829-842) had various mechanical objects in use at his court such as the planisphere, lions and gryphons, but these were reputedly melted down by Michael III. Thus it could be construed that the throne of Solomon must have been rebuilt after Michael's death and before Liudprand's visit of 949. However P. Karlin-Hayter, 'Michael III and Money', *BSL*, 50 (1989), 1-8, doubts that the objects were melted down, but more fundamentally than this, as Brett, 'Automata', 482, points out, 'there is no question in any reference to the earlier set of a "Throne of Solomon," or of these automata having formed part of it as the *De Ceremoniis* describes them'. See also E. Villc-Patlagean, 'Une image de Salomon en basileus byzantin', *Revue des Études Juives*, fourth series, 181 (1962), 9-33, esp. 14-17; A. Alföldi, 'Die Geschichte des Throntabernakels', *La Nouvelle Choe*, 1-2 (1949-50), 537-566, esp. 539, who connects the throne with Heraclius, and Heraclius is linked with the Magnaura by M. Mundell Mango, 'Imperial Art in the Seventh Century', *New Constantines*, 109-138, esp. 112.

<sup>105</sup> Magdalino, 'Nea'.

<sup>106</sup> For the *Procheiron* see I. and P. Zepos, *Jus Graeco-Romanum*, II (Athens, 1962); for the prooimion see Schminck, *Rechtsbüchern*, 56-61. This law book is traditionally dated to 870-879 for it names Constantine and Leo as Basil's co-emperors, yet Schminck, *Rechtsbüchern*, 55-107, has dated it to 907, arguing that it was a revision of the *Eisagoge* ordered by Leo VI. For the illuminated manuscript see de Nersessian, 'Illustrations', 208.

<sup>107</sup> *GMC*, 844. G. P. Majeska, *Russian Travelers to Constantinople in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries*, *DOS* 19 (Washington DC, 1984), 249, states that Basil took this action 'as a symbol of his devotion to the work of building the church'.

interest in Solomon as imperial judge, builder and wise man, but it is the figure of David that was the key factor in the ideology of his reign; like Heraclius before him Basil was set on establishing himself as a new David.<sup>108</sup> This Old Testament model appears to have suggested itself<sup>109</sup> due to the striking parallels between the lives of Basil and David, and also because Basil wished to claim divine support and legitimacy for his reign which had been initiated by the bloody eradication of both Bardas and Michael III. Basil, like David, had risen from obscurity and become king through the death of his one time patron, who had fallen from divine favour. David's rise to royalty and success were all due to the fact that he had been selected by God, and by linking himself with this king Basil was effectively asserting that his own rule was divinely ordained. The image of Basil as new David finds testimony in several works produced during the reign. Photios wrote two hymns linking David with Basil, and it seems likely that he was also the author of a panegyric poem on the emperor which casts Basil as a new David.<sup>110</sup> This theme is also found in a mosaic that was put up on the ceiling of the palace apartment called the Kainourgion, which depicted the imperial family surrounding a cross; inscriptions were incorporated in the mosaic, one being a prayer of the children which begins 'We thank Thee, O Word of God, that Thou hast raised our father from Davidic poverty and hast anointed

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<sup>108</sup> See Markopoulos, 'Laudatory Poem'; I. Kalavrezou, 'A New Type of Icon: Ivories and Steatites', *Κωνσταντινός Ζ'*, 377-396, esp. 392-395; H. Maguire, 'The Art of Comparing in Byzantium', *The Art Bulletin*, 70 (1988), 88-103, esp. 89-93; Magdalino, 'Nea', der Nersessian, 'Illustrations', 222. The interest in Old Testament figures was shared with at least one other member of the Macedonian dynasty, for it is well known that Constantine VII also had a marked preoccupation with David and Solomon, which is reflected in several works from his reign such as the *Book of Ceremonies*, the *De Administrando Imperio*, the *Life of Basil*, and the Paris Psalter: see Anagnostakes, 'Τὸ ἐπεισόδιο', 389-390; G. Huxley, 'The Scholarship of Constantine Porphyrogenitus', *PRIA*, 80 (1980), 29-40; H. Buchthal, 'The Exaltation of David', *JWarb*, 37 (1974), 330-333.

<sup>109</sup> The possibility of influence from or competition with the Carolingian court exists. In the ninth century at the Carolingian court it appears that the use of the Old Testament royal models of David and Solomon was prominent: see for instance J. L. Nelson, *Charles the Bald* (London and New York, 1992), esp. 15, 83, 85, 92, 155, where she highlights the interest of Charles the Bald (843-877) in David in particular, but also in Solomon. For comparison see also her 'Charles le Chauve et les utilisations du savoir', *L'école carolingienne d'Auxerre de Murethach à Remi 830-908*, edd. D. Iogna-Prat, C. Jeudy and G. Lobrichon (Paris, 1991), 37-54.

<sup>110</sup> For the hymns see *PG* 102, 581, 584; Markopoulos, 'Laudatory Poem', 226; Magdalino, 'Nea', 58. For the poem and its supposed Photian authorship see Markopoulos, 'Laudatory Poem', 226.

him with the unction of the Holy Ghost'.<sup>111</sup> In addition to these indicators the *Book of Ceremonies* does record instances where the emperor is hailed as a new David, and Vogt believed that these acclamations dated to the reign of Basil I.<sup>112</sup>

That Basil was keen to present himself as a new David is evident, but it seems that he wished to take the model further than this by ensuring that his children would be wise, just as David's son Solomon had been wise. Basil appointed the wise Photios to be tutor to his offspring, but in addition to this the decoration of the Kainourgion and the comments that Basil's biographer makes about it can be cited. In a mosaic in the apartment Basil and Eudokia were shown enthroned, whilst their children were represented round the building wearing imperial dress. The boys were depicted 'holding codices that contain the divine commandments' whilst the girls carried 'books of the divine laws', and the biographer notes that 'in this way the artist wished to show that not only the male, but also the female progeniture had been initiated into holy writ and shared in divine wisdom (τῆς θείας σοφίας) even if their father had not at first been familiar with letters on account of the circumstances of his life, and yet caused all his children to partake of learning (σοφίας)'.<sup>113</sup> Thus it appears that Basil was deliberately ensuring that his heir would be a *sophos*, and this scenario finds confirmation in the two parainetic texts that were written for Leo. In the final chapter of the *First Parainesis* Leo is found being urged to read other works that would help him to be a good emperor; those works recommended include the 'resolutions and lesson' of Jesus of Sirach (an apocryphal wisdom book) and above all the maxims of Solomon.<sup>114</sup> The *Second Parainesis* makes Basil's desire that Leo should be a *sophos* much more explicit. In this text the importance of *sophia* is stressed by the concept of wisdom being given a higher profile; the work opens with *sophia* as its theme. It is stated that wisdom was granted as a gift by the All Holy Triad to man, through which he would recognise God and glorify Him in everything. Basil then addresses Leo saying 'So you, my God-guarded child, being reared with wisdom become a φιλόσοφος for us from

<sup>111</sup> For the decoration of the Kainourgion see *VB*, 331-335, which has been translated by Mango, *Sources and Documents*, 196-198. Mango's translation is used here.

<sup>112</sup> See *De Cer.*, 322, 368; Vogt, *Commentaire*, II, 140.

<sup>113</sup> *VB*, 333-334; Mango, *Sources and Documents*, 198.

<sup>114</sup> *PG* 107, lvi; J.-M. Sansterre, 'A propos des titres d'empereur et de roi dans le haut moyen âge', *Byz*, 61 (1991), 15-43, esp. 24. For Jesus of Sirach see Dvornik, *Byzantine Political Philosophy*, I, 362-364; *The Oxford Annotated Apocrypha*, ed. B. M. Metzger (Oxford, 1965), 128-197.

this—fearing God; for the beginning of wisdom is fear of the Lord'.<sup>115</sup> Leo is then exhorted to occupy himself with the study of the wisdom taught by God. Thus it appears that Leo owes his wise epithet to his father, who intentionally cultivated that image of his heir as a *sophos* since he wanted to recall the glorious duo of David and Solomon<sup>116</sup>, just as under the former new David Heraclius his imperial son and heir Heraclius Constantine was likened unto Solomon.<sup>117</sup> Leo may certainly have earned the epithet 'wise' in his own right, but the frequency with which it was used to describe him indicates that he had been intentionally forced into this mould in the first place by the pressure of Basil's ideological objectives.

However there is a problem with this theory; parallels can be spotted between Leo and Solomon, as witnessed by later Byzantine authors, but none of the extant sources contemporary with Leo's reign explicitly describe the emperor as a second Solomon.<sup>118</sup> Yet there are indications that they were aware of this link. When the patriarch Nikolaos wrote to the pope in 912 relating his version of the tetragamy affair he recalled that he had acknowledged to the emperor's face the fact that he had been 'glorified by Him [God] with wisdom especially', thus recognising that Leo VI had received his *sophia* as a gift from God just as Solomon had done.<sup>119</sup> Indeed as Gavrilović argues it may be this very concept that the narthex mosaic

<sup>115</sup> PG 107, lvii.

<sup>116</sup> It is interesting to note that it was in the ninth century that the duo of David and Solomon became an integral element in images of the resurrection: see A. Kartsonis, *Anastasis: The Making of an Image* (Princeton, 1986), 186-203.

<sup>117</sup> See Spain Alexander, 'Heraclius', 223, 231.

<sup>118</sup> Schminck, 'Datierung', 86-87, spotted the links between Leo and Solomon. As early as 927 a Byzantine author is found likening Leo VI to Solomon due to the qualities that he possessed and the fact that his reign had been a golden age: see Jenkins, 'Peace', 293; P. Karlin-Hayter, 'The Homily on the Peace with Bulgaria of 927 and the "Coronation" of 913', *JÖB*, 17 (1968), 29-39, repr. *Studies in*, XVII. Nikephoros the Philosopher in his *Life of Antony Kauleas* refers to the emperor Leo speaking honeyed phrases equal to those of David and Solomon: see *Monumenta Graeca et Latina*, I. 15. 15-16. Byzantinists such as Grégoire, 'Blais', 399, and Karlin-Hayter, *VE, Commentary*, 155, viewed this text as a tenth-century work, but the general consensus seems to be that it dates to the fourteenth century as its author is identified with Nikephoros Gregoras: see the *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, ed. A. P. Kazhdan (New York, 1991), 125. A Russian text written at the earliest at the end of the fifteenth century records that the figure of Leo the Wise was like a second Solomon: see Majeska, *Travelers*, 144, n. 55.

<sup>119</sup> *Nicholas. Letters*, 218. 75-76. For Solomon receiving wisdom from God see Third Kings, 4. 29.

in Hagia Sophia is illustrating.<sup>120</sup> Another pointer to the identification of Leo with Solomon is a letter of Leo Choiosphaktes. Writing to the emperor following his exile towards the end of Leo's reign Choiosphaktes states that the emperor ranks among the wise kings, indicating that Leo and Solomon could have been linked in Byzantine minds.<sup>121</sup> The exiled diplomat offers further proof of this when he goes on to ponder who was responsible for his fall from grace. He wonders if his slaves had played a part, and asks Leo 'Have you not heard the things about Jeroboam the lord-slayer? I know you have heard; are you not familiar with Hermogenes who says: 'For the slave is by nature enemy to the masters'? I know that in reading these words you have understood them very well. How? You see clearly and daily conspiracies formed against your majesty by your slaves, who have been heaped with your favours. I know it, you see it and understand it'.<sup>122</sup> As the insistent Choiosphaktes asserts he is referring to actual events, perhaps the fall of Samonas in 908 following a plot against a rival eunuch Constantine that back-fired, for Samonas was indeed the most honoured of the emperor's servants.<sup>123</sup> But what is of most concern here is the allusion to Jeroboam; this man was a rebellious slave of king Solomon.<sup>124</sup> It appears that a servant of the emperor had been cast as Jeroboam to Leo's Solomon, a comparison that may have been prompted by the fact that the emperor was recognised as a Byzantine Solomon. The Solomonic model can also be detected in the account of the relationship between the first two Macedonian emperors and their Peloponnesian patroness, the rich

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<sup>120</sup> See Gavrilović, 'Humiliation'. The Russian text cited in n. 118 above records that there was a mosaic of Solomon over the main doors in Hagia Sophia, but there is doubt about this testimony: see Majeska, *Travelers*, 236. It must be said that the interpretation of this image is notoriously varied and difficult; N. Oikonomidès, 'Leo VI and the Narthex Mosaic of Saint Sophia', *DOP*, 30 (1976), 151-172, sees it as a monument of the triumph of Nikolaos over Leo, whilst Schminck, 'Rota', believed it showed Photios's supremacy over Basil I. See also R. Cormack, 'Interpreting the Mosaics of S. Sophia at Istanbul', *Art History*, 4 (1981), 131-149; J. Featherstone, 'A Note on the Dream of Bardas Caesar in the Life of Ignatios and the Archangel in the Mosaic over the Imperial Doors of St. Sophia', *BZ*, 74 (1981), 42-43; E. J. W. Hawkins, 'Further Observations on the Narthex Mosaic in St. Sophia at Istanbul', *DOP*, 22 (1968), 151-166; C. Osieczkowska, 'La mosaïque de la porte royale à saint-sophie de Constantinople et la litanie de tous les saints', *Byz*, 9 (1934), 41-83; I. D. Ștefănescu, 'Sur la mosaïque de la porte impériale à sainte-sophie de Constantinople', *Byz*, 9 (1934), 517-523.

<sup>121</sup> Kolias, *Choerosphactès*, 105. 76-77.

<sup>122</sup> Kolias, *Choerosphactès*, 105. 92-107. 97.

<sup>123</sup> For Samonas and Constantine see Chapter Eight.

<sup>124</sup> Third Kings, 11. 26-27.

widow Danelis.<sup>125</sup> The depiction of this woman and her fabulous wealth has puzzled Byzantinists, and Runciman has even referred to the fairy-tale quality of the story of Danelis.<sup>126</sup> The puzzle is perhaps explicable if it is accepted that the image of Danelis has been affected by the Biblical model of the queen of Sheba.<sup>127</sup> Just as the Biblical queen visited the court of Solomon, so Danelis visited the court of both Basil I and Leo VI.<sup>128</sup> Both women came with vast trains and presented the rulers with splendid gifts. When Danelis visited Basil she was received in the Magnaura, where the emperor may have been seated on the throne of Solomon. She even appears in the guise of the queen of the Peloponnese.<sup>129</sup> Danelis's second visit to Constantinople is recorded in less detail, but significantly on this occasion she came to see the most wise Leo, just as the queen of Sheba's visit to Solomon was inspired by her desire to see this wise king.

Further factors also suggest that the imperial ideology of Leo VI, just like that of his father and his son, had as an integral part the influence of Old Testament models. For not only was Leo famed for being wise but also for being mild (*praos*) and peaceful (*eirenikos*), qualities that again lead us back to David and Solomon. Leo's mildness is attested by several sources from his reign. Basil I in the *First Parainesis* seems particularly keen that Leo should be a mild emperor<sup>130</sup>; the *Life of Theophano* notes that Leo was mild, and indicates that his mild rule was divinely ordained<sup>131</sup>; one of the poems marking the death of Leo acknowledges this quality as being a particular trait of the emperor<sup>132</sup>; the *Life of Euthymios* hails Leo as the mildest of rulers<sup>133</sup>; the author of the biography of Basil I refers almost as often to Leo's mildness as to his wisdom.<sup>134</sup> Most important of all is the testimony of the *Life of*

<sup>125</sup> For Danelis and her relationship with Basil and Leo see *VB*, 226-228, 316-321.

<sup>126</sup> Runciman, 'Danelis', 427.

<sup>127</sup> This thesis has also been proposed by Anagnostakes, 'Τὸ ἑπεισόδιο', who points additionally to the influence of the Alexander romance. However Ševčenko, 'Re-reading', 192-193, accounted for the seemingly odd details about Danelis by suggesting that she was 'an *archontissa* of a Peloponnesian *Sklaivmia* in the process of peaceful and diplomatic absorption into the empire', and poured cold water on Anagnostakes's interpretation.

<sup>128</sup> For the queen of Sheba see Third Kings, 10. 1-10, 13.

<sup>129</sup> It is interesting to note, as Huxley, 'Scholarship', 38, points out, that the *Russian Primary Chronicle* portrayed Olga as the queen of Sheba to Constantine VII's Solomon.

<sup>130</sup> *PG* 107, xxxvi, xxxv.

<sup>131</sup> *VT*, 7. 26-27, 8. 12, 9. 31.

<sup>132</sup> Ševčenko, 'Poems', 202. 22, 202. 32, 202. 36.

<sup>133</sup> *VE*, 11. 11-12.

<sup>134</sup> *VB*, 313, 320, 352.

*Constantine the Jew*, as it is believed to date from Leo's own reign, and it also points to the model for the emperor's mildness. Commenting upon the character of Leo the author asserts 'I know not of a soul more mild (πραοτέρως) save that man David of olden times'.<sup>135</sup> Thus Leo's mildness has connections with an Old Testament model, and the same can be said of his peaceful quality. Again the *First Parainesis* recommends the quality<sup>136</sup>; the *Life of Theophano* attests it as characteristic of Leo<sup>137</sup>; a document referring to the selling of land in 897 has many adjectives to describe Leo and Alexander, one being that of 'peacemakers'<sup>138</sup>; the acrostic device of Leo's own *Taktika* identifies the emperor as 'peaceful'<sup>139</sup>; the *Life of Euthymios* calls Leo 'the most peaceful emperor'.<sup>140</sup> In the case of this particular virtue the connecting Old Testament model is Solomon. Peacefulness was particularly linked with this king; not only was his reign characterised by peace, but his very name means 'peaceful', a fact that Kartsonis believes that the Byzantines were well aware of.<sup>141</sup> Dagron notes that Eusebius in his ekphrasis of the church of Tyre inaugurated in 318 names the addressee 'our most peaceful (εἰρηνικώτατος) Solomon'.<sup>142</sup> The speech that marked the peace of 927 with the Bulgarians cryptically identified Leo VI as 'the peaceful and wise Solomon'.<sup>143</sup> Thus by having ascribed to him or laying claim to the combined qualities of wisdom, mildness and peacefulness Leo, just like his father and son, emerges as an emperor whose image was moulded in the form of the two famous Old Testament kings David and Solomon.

It is worth remembering too that David and Solomon were ancestors of Christ, and also precursors of Christ<sup>144</sup>; the Macedonian emperors were perhaps as much concerned with the New Testament descendant Jesus Christ as the Old Testament ancestor kings. It is indeed striking that Leo was not only called wise, but most wise. Could it be that the emperor was attempting to outdo the Old Testament king, endeavouring to surpass the reputation of Solomon, and perhaps also hoping to create a greater resonance by the epithet

<sup>135</sup> AASS, Nov IV, 648.

<sup>136</sup> PG 107, xxxv.

<sup>137</sup> VI, 7. 27.

<sup>138</sup> *Actes de Lavra*, I, *Des origines à 1204*, edd. P. Lemerle, A. Guillou, N. Svoronos, with D. Papachryssanthou (Paris, 1970), 89.

<sup>139</sup> Grosdidier de Matons, 'Trois études', 232.

<sup>140</sup> VE, 73. 3.

<sup>141</sup> Kartsonis, *Anastasis*, 192.

<sup>142</sup> Dagron, *Constantinople imaginaire*, 303.

<sup>143</sup> Jenkins, 'Peace', 290, 293.

<sup>144</sup> Kartsonis, *Anastasis*, 195.

'most wise'; who could be more wise than Solomon than God himself, from whom wisdom came?<sup>145</sup> Certainly the epithets of mildness and peacefulness evoke the model of Christ, as revealed in the *First Parainesis*. There Basil states that Leo is his son by flesh, but that he will also be called the son of the heavenly Emperor through spirit by being 'a student of the mild and peaceful Christ', citing Matthew 5. 9, 'Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God'.<sup>146</sup> Leo could be called most peaceful, not simply peaceful, and this takes on further significance in the light of Kartsonis's observation that it was 'commonly acknowledged from the days of Pseudo-Athanasius to those of Psellus' that 'Solomon means peaceful and Christ is the most peaceful'.<sup>147</sup> The *Taktika* calls Leo not only peaceful, but peaceful in Christ.<sup>148</sup> Perhaps then it should not be surprising that no contemporary source explicitly names Leo VI as a new Solomon; the emperor may have been more concerned to evoke a higher plane.

In conclusion several observations can be made about the wisdom of Leo VI. He possessed the quality during his own lifetime, and the origin of his reputation as a *sophos* lies with the political ideology and aspirations of his father. Leo was to be the new Solomon to the new David. The epithet seems to have been particularly appropriate to a wide range of roles and skills that Leo gives evidence of as emperor, roles and skills that qualified a ruler to be wise as far back as the days of ancient Egypt and which were transmitted and transmuted down the centuries, shaping the political philosophy of other cultures. Leo was indeed perceived to be learned, but this was not the sole factor that made him a *sophos*. Amongst the other skills that he was known to possess should be included the ability to predict the future. Above all else Leo's extensive and exceptional reputation for *sophia* evokes and reflects the fact that he was an emperor with a highly inflated perception of his religious role and authority. Thus is the reality of Leo the wise.

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<sup>145</sup> Adding to the impression that Leo saw himself as a superior ruler is the fact that he did not revere past emperors, a point noted by Magdalino, 'Non-Judicial'.

<sup>146</sup> PG 107, xxxv.

<sup>147</sup> Kartsonis, *Anastasis*.

<sup>148</sup> Grosdidier de Matons, 'Trois études', 232.

## CHAPTER SIX

### THE FOUR WIVES OF LEO VI

Leo VI is renowned as the Byzantine emperor who dared to breach canon and civil law by proceeding to a fourth marriage, and Byzantinists have devoted much time and energy to the study of this controversial element of his reign, the so-called tetragamy.<sup>1</sup> The fourth marriage certainly was one of the major incidents of the reign, leading to a rift within the church that was not healed until the mid-tenth century. However it should not be ignored that as far as Leo was concerned he had secured for himself an apparent victory, for in 907 an oecumenical synod decided to tolerate his union. Also worthy of greater acknowledgment is that the tetragamy crisis reveals much about the nature of the emperor, such as his desires and ambitions and the methods by which he resolved the problems facing him; indeed the tetragamy crisis is the most obvious facet of the reign, though not the sole one, that demonstrates his attitude towards ecclesiastical authorities and his perception of his own authority. Another area of concern regarding the tetragamy is that whilst the fourth marriage itself has been the focus of much attention the first three marriages have not been scrutinised to the same degree. Thus the thrust of this chapter will be a consideration of the marriages as a whole and in their own right, and also of the aims and nature of Leo VI as reflected in this area.

The issue at the heart of the tetragamy crisis was Leo's desire to have a son of his own blood who would succeed him on the throne, and it is clear that the emperor would go to any lengths to achieve this aim. However at the time of Leo's first marriage no one could have foreseen how crucial this issue would become, though no doubt

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<sup>1</sup> See for instance Diehl, *Portraits*; R. J. H. Jenkins, 'Three Documents Concerning the "Tetragamy"', *DOP*, 16 (1962), 231-241, repr. *Studies on*, VIII, 'Note on Nicetas', *Imperial Centuries*; Jenkins and Laourdas, 'Eight Letters'; P. Karlin-Hayter, 'La "préhistoire" de la dernière volonté de Léon VI', *Byz*, 33 (1963), 483-486, repr. *Studies in*, XII, 'Synode'; N. Oikonomidès, 'La dernière volonté de Léon VI au sujet de la tétragamie (mai 912)', *BZ*, 56 (1963), 46-52, repr. *Documents et études sur les institutions de Byzance (VIIe-XVe s.)* (London, 1976), IV, 'La "préhistoire" de la dernière volonté de Léon VI au sujet de la tétragamie', *BZ*, 56 (1963), 264-270, repr. *Documents et études*, V, 'Narthex Mosaic'; R. Guiland, 'Les nocces plurales à Byzance', *BSI*, 9 (1947), 9-20, repr. *Études byzantines* (Paris, 1959), XI, 233-261.

the motivation behind the marriage was largely the creation of a male child who would be the future heir of the Macedonian dynasty. Yet the first marriage would be a vital factor in the whole affair; it was presumed that Byzantines would usually marry only once, a second marriage being not entirely free from censure.<sup>2</sup> The woman first chosen to be Leo's wife was thus expected to be his partner for life, but the details of the union that have survived indicate that the young emperor was not content with his bride.

The first marriage was arranged by Leo's father and mother shortly after their son had stepped into the position of heir-apparent following the death of his elder brother Constantine in 879. It is crystal clear that Leo had no choice in the question of who was to be his wife. The *Life of Theophano* reports that although a bride-show was held from which Leo's intended was to be selected it was in fact his mother the empress Eudokia who chose the successful candidate, without seeking her son's opinion, and that her decision was ratified by Basil<sup>3</sup>; the *Life of Euthymios* relates that Leo was forced to marry his first bride on the insistence of his father.<sup>4</sup> Yet there was method in the enforcement of the choice of the parents; they had chosen the bride very carefully. Despite the story of the bride-show it is evident that the first wife Theophano Martinakia was not miraculously chosen to be Leo's augusta<sup>5</sup> simply by virtue of her beauty<sup>6</sup>; this was undeniably a union based on deeper considerations. It was Mango who first highlighted the importance of Theophano's family for her selection as Leo's bride.<sup>7</sup> She belonged to the Martinakios family, which was closely related to the Amorian house. Under the emperor Theophilos one of its members, Martinakes, was forced to become a monk and turn his house into a monastery after the emperor had received a prophecy that the Martinakioi would take the throne after his son and wife (Michael III and Theodora).<sup>8</sup> The *Life of Theophano* admits

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<sup>2</sup> Guiland, *Études*, 233-235.

<sup>3</sup> *VT*, 6, 6-24.

<sup>4</sup> *VE*, 41, 16-19.

<sup>5</sup> The question of bride-shows is debated. Treadgold, 'Bride-Shows', has argued that they were a historical reality, whilst L. Rydén, 'The Bride-shows at the Byzantine Court—History or Fiction?', *Eranos*, 83 (1985), 175-191, has presented the case that they were in fact purely literary creations. The latter view I find more persuasive, but see also L.-M. Hans, 'Der Kaiser als Märchenprinz. Brautschau und Heiratspolitik in Konstantinopel 395-882', *JÖB*, 38 (1988), 33-52.

<sup>6</sup> Schreiner, 'Réflexions', 189, argues that beauty was the decisive factor in the selection of Theophano as Leo's bride, playing down the political factor that has been detected.

<sup>7</sup> Mango, 'Eudocia'.

<sup>8</sup> *TC*, 121.

that Theophano was of imperial blood and that this was one of the factors that induced Eudokia to select her out of the line up of young virgins.<sup>9</sup> The *Menologion of Basil II* also underlines the imperial connection of the family by stating that Theophano's father Constantine, when *illustris*, was related to three emperors, meaning the Amorians Michael II, Theophilus and Michael III.<sup>10</sup> The connection with the Amorians is significant enough, given Basil's own links with the Amorian house, but it is made even more so by the indication that Eudokia Ingerine herself was related to the Martinakioi, as Skylitzes asserts.<sup>11</sup> The comment of Leo VI in his *Epitaphios* that his mother was 'born of a race that scarcely ceded to that which had the supreme rank' can be seen as lending weight to the statement of Skylitzes.<sup>12</sup> Further Mango observed that the prophecy given to Theophilus concerning the coming to power of the Martinakioi must have been recorded because it came true, and this could only have happened if indeed Eudokia Ingerine was a member of this family.<sup>13</sup> Again Leo's *Epitaphios* is of interest for in it he alludes to certain prophecies that indicated the accession of his mother; the prediction made to Theophilus may have been one of these.<sup>14</sup> Thus the story of the bride-show and the spontaneous choice of Theophano looks increasingly unconvincing given the wealth of connections between the Martinakioi and the Macedonian dynasty; Eudokia surely knew perfectly well who Theophano was. But the question remains, why did Basil and Eudokia want to marry her to their son? Is the existence of the family connection sufficient explanation? A factor may have been the desire to further cement the Amorian and the Macedonian families by increasing the ties between them, adding to the impression of a hybrid dynasty. Another reason for the union may have been the lack of threat that Theophano posed; she seems to have carried no excess baggage of power-hungry relatives, a fact that would have pleased Basil who was wary of the danger that family members could

<sup>9</sup> *VT*, 6. 6-24.

<sup>10</sup> See Kurtz, *Zwei Griechische Texte*, 48. 7-8; *PG* 117, 209. It is Herlong, *Social Mobility*, 120, who says that the three emperors alluded to are the Amorian emperors. Mango, 'Eudocia', 20, had conjectured that the emperors were Theophilus, Michael III and Basil I, but this does not make sense; if Constantine was related to these three emperors he would then have been related to more than three. Herlong's theory is more convincing, for it was only the Amorians to whom Constantine was related at the time when he was an *illustris*.

<sup>11</sup> *Scylitzae*, 127. 19-128. 21. See Mango, 'Eudocia', 20.

<sup>12</sup> Vogt and Hausherr, 'Oraison', 52. 18-19.

<sup>13</sup> Mango, 'Eudocia', 20.

<sup>14</sup> Vogt and Hausherr, 'Oraison', 52. 28-29.

present.<sup>15</sup> Theophano was an only child whose mother Anna had died whilst the saint was still a baby.<sup>16</sup> There is no indication that any of her relatives gained high political office after she became empress. Her *Life* does allude to her uncle Martinos Martinakios who held the post of *atriklines*, meaning that he was in charge of organising guests at imperial banquets like his more famous contemporary Philotheos; as such this was hardly a position that enabled him to present any political threat to the imperial family.<sup>17</sup> Thus Leo was married to Theophano not only because she was a relation of the mixed dynasty, but perhaps more importantly because she was safe.

With hindsight these were not the only considerations Basil and Eudokia should have made; it proved a fatal mistake to neglect, or over-rule, Leo's own wishes. Leo did not want to marry Theophano. It seems likely that prior to his marriage with Theophano Leo had formed a friendship with Zoe Zaoutzaina, and he may have hoped that she would be his wife. The first marriage then came as a bitter blow for Leo since he was forced to abandon his personal desires and conform to the wishes of his parents, which were strictly enforced by Basil. In 882 Leo was married to Theophano Martinakia with full imperial ceremony, during which the bride was also crowned.<sup>18</sup> Not long after this union the empress Eudokia died, and Theophano became the chief *augusta* at the imperial court.<sup>19</sup> No doubt it was in remembrance of the mother of the imperial family that the name Eudokia was chosen for Leo and Theophano's first and only child.<sup>20</sup> It was not apparent at the time, but the birth of this baby girl marked the beginning of Leo's struggle to acquire a son to whom he could pass on imperial power.

The *Life of Theophano* presents the marriage of Leo and his first wife in an idealised light, but it is known from elsewhere that all was not so perfect as it alleges. Prior to Leo's imprisonment in 883, and thus

<sup>15</sup> *PG* 107, xxviii. For the attitude of Basil to family see Chapter Nine below.

<sup>16</sup> *VT*, 3, 6-7.

<sup>17</sup> *VT*, 21, 31. It is interesting to note that the father of the author of the *Life* had responsibilities for organising state ceremony too: see *VT*, 17, 18-28. See also the comments of Alexakis, 'Slokakas', 48-49.

<sup>18</sup> *VT*, 6, 25-34; *GMC*, 846. The date of 882, 'and quite probably in September', is proposed by Jenkins, 'Chronological Accuracy', 101. Karlin-Hayter, *VE, Commentary*, 167, is more cautious and says of the wedding that 'We only know for certain that it took place before Leo's imprisonment'. It can be added that Leo must have been married at least nine months before the time of his imprisonment for by then he and Theophano had already had a child as is indicated by *VT*, 8, 5. If Leo was imprisoned in July 883 the marriage must have occurred at the latest in October 882.

<sup>19</sup> *VT*, 7, 2-10. The chronicles do not record Eudokia's passing.

<sup>20</sup> *VT*, 8, 5, 8, 16; *De Cer.*, 643.

very shortly after his wedding with Theophano, the young emperor was accused of having an affair with Zoe Zaoutzaina.<sup>21</sup> It was Theophano (certainly pregnant at the time) who had formed this suspicion, and she informed her father-in-law of her fears. Basil acted swiftly; Leo was beaten by him and Zoe was forced to marry a certain Theodore Gouzouniates. This incident reveals that although Leo had been married against his will he still remained attached to his former friend. Leo himself asserted the innocence of his relationship with Zoe at that time, but it seems that Theophano knew perfectly well where the liaison was heading, and it was bad enough that her husband was seen to be devoting time to another woman. Despite Theophano's alleged lack of jealousy<sup>22</sup> it is plain that in the first year of her marriage she had not yet resigned herself to the fact that her husband was not content to have her as his partner. For the moment Leo was sharply recalled to the wishes and expectations of his father, but the further development of the marriage following this incident was abruptly curtailed in the summer of 883 when the heir-apparent was accused of intending to assassinate his father, was disinherited and confined in the palace apartment of the Pearl.<sup>23</sup>

The *Life of Theophano* adds a unique detail to the imprisonment episode, that Theophano and the child Eudokia were also confined with Leo<sup>24</sup>; a detail that seems puzzling. Would Basil really have taken such a measure against the wife and daughter of his disgraced son? Could Theophano and Leo have undergone a three year imprisonment together, and without the conception of another child? It is tempting to believe that the hagiographer has invented this slant to the story in his desire to display Theophano as a tower of strength and support for Leo in his hour of need, to portray her as a new Sarah and a second Rebecca. If the assertion that Theophano was imprisoned with Leo is doubted the question then arises of what she did do during this three year period. It is often supposed that she became a saintly figure, devoting herself to charity and good causes, simply because she found herself in a troubled marriage; but her development as a saint should perhaps be located in the period of Leo's imprisonment instead. She might have devoted herself to prayer, piety and charity in the hope of somehow aiding Leo, or more selfishly for her own security she maybe sought to become a pious nonentity, retiring from court to monastic seclusion. By the

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<sup>21</sup> For this episode see *VE*, 41. 1-3.

<sup>22</sup> *VT*, 23. 30; *GMC*, 856.

<sup>23</sup> *GMC*, 846-847.

<sup>24</sup> *VT*, 8. 5.

time of Leo's release she would then have carved out for herself a completely new life-style in which it was difficult to relocate her husband. Whether this scenario has any truth, it does seem that after the termination of the imprisonment and the start of Leo's reign he and Theophano had no common life. Her *Life* is not much help here for it only speaks in generalities about the *politeia* of the saintly empress: she spent her time in chanting, she hated wealth and luxury, she performed works of charity, endowing orphans, widows, the poor and monks, she was totally free from jealousy or ill-will, and she devoted herself to a programme of *askesis*. It is in the *Life of Euthymios* that concrete details are found on Theophano's life during Leo's reign. She is seen to spend time at religious sites, such as the church of the Theotokos at Blachernai and Pege.<sup>25</sup> This text relates that upon the death of the child Eudokia both Leo and Theophano viewed their union as finished.<sup>26</sup> It was in the vacuum of his relationship with Theophano that Leo revived his old friendship with Zoe.

The circumstances of the affair are not entirely clear; when did it begin? The *Life of Theophano* is not of much assistance since it tries to conceal the problems that existed between Leo and his first wife, and only gives a veiled reference to Leo's relationship with Zoe through the fact that Theophano was renowned for her lack of jealousy. The *Life of Euthymios* is not as helpful as might be expected, only pointing to Leo's association with Zoe when the question of the emperor's divorce from Theophano following the death of their daughter is raised.<sup>27</sup> It is the chronicles which contain the most explicit record of the liaison, stating that at the time of Stylianos's appointment to the office of basileiopatōr (891-893) Leo and Zoe had already become lovers.<sup>28</sup> An important figure to consider in the history of the liaison is the husband that was foisted onto Zoe by Basil, Theodore Gouzouniates. The chronicles assert that he died before the affair began, whilst the *Life of Euthymios* states that he passed away only after the death of Theophano herself. Grumel took up the case for the chroniclers<sup>29</sup>, whilst Karlin-Hayter has maintained the integrity of the hagiographer.<sup>30</sup> It is however not sufficient to say that the *Life* is a more reliable source; it is quite capable of creating its own distortions,

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<sup>25</sup> *VE*, 21. 12-15. She was also responsible for building a church dedicated to St Constantine: see Majeska, 'Body'.

<sup>26</sup> *VE*, 37. 27-35.

<sup>27</sup> *VE*, 37. 33-34.

<sup>28</sup> *GMC*, 852.

<sup>29</sup> Grumel, 'Chronologie', 22-25.

<sup>30</sup> Karlin-Hayter, 'Théophano', 17-18.

and it is also capable of making errors. In this instance the chronicle version is to be favoured; Jenkins has shown that the Logothete's chronology is worthy of trust. Further the *Life of Euthymios* shows that Leo and Theophano were going to divorce after the death of their daughter, at a time when Stephen was still patriarch, which suggests that Theodore was already out of the picture and Zoe was free to remarry.

Regarding the nature of the affair itself the chronicles give the impression that it was openly acknowledged. On the occasion of the assassination plot at the monastery of Damianos it is stated that Zoe accompanied Leo to the site whilst Theophano remained at the shrine of the holy soros at Blachernai; indeed it was the fact that Zoe was sleeping with the emperor and heard the plotters that saved Leo.<sup>31</sup> Theophano seems to have resigned herself to this state of affairs, and the *Life of Euthymios* shows that following the death of her daughter she often resided away from the palace at the shrine at Blachernai and that it was her wish to be divorced; apparently it was only the influence of Euthymios that prevented her from agreeing to the annulment of the marriage.<sup>32</sup> It is surely significant that this proposed divorce was on the agenda prior to the death of the patriarch Stephen; not only does this give a date by which the marriage was unofficially dead (May 893), but it also indicates that Leo's brother could have used his position as head of the church to sanction the divorce. The contemplated divorce reveals that Leo was intending to marry for the second time, and this further marriage was presumably expected to be his last; Zoe Zaoutzaina was to be Leo's preferred wife for life, and it was by her that he intended to have his son and heir.<sup>33</sup>

Thus after the death of Leo's daughter Eudokia marital and extra-marital affairs reached a stalemate and a status quo. Theophano

<sup>31</sup> *GMC*, 855-856.

<sup>32</sup> *VE*, 37. 33-39. 13.

<sup>33</sup> W. Ohnsorge, 'Zur Frage der Töchter Kaiser Leons VI', *BZ* 51 (1958), 78-81, esp. 81, contests that Leo and Zoe had a child (their daughter Anna) whilst Theophano was still alive. He points out that if Anna was of marriageable age for the union with Louis of 900 she must have been born before Zoe became Leo's wife and augusta in 888. He also conjectures that Anna died in 906 when giving birth to her son Constantine. Such theories are open to doubt given the fact that it is not certain that Anna did go west to marry Louis, despite what C. W. Previtc-Orton, 'Charles Constantine of Vienne', *EHR*, 29 (1914), 703-706, says. This issue will be considered further below; for the moment it is sufficient to say that it can be argued that Anna was born when Zoe was empress. It seems an unlikely scenario that if Leo and Zoe had conceived one child prior to Theophano's death that no others were also conceived, as appears to be the case.

would not agree to the divorce, but she did stay out of the way of her husband, letting him conduct his liaison with Zoe. The death of Theophano in 895 or 896<sup>34</sup> should have changed this situation. Theophano's ascetic regime had eventually endangered her life, making her ill, as her *Life* makes explicit.<sup>35</sup> It also relates that the empress was aware of her impending death and took the opportunity of bidding farewell to Leo, whom she kissed and entreated on behalf of her relatives, friends and slaves.<sup>36</sup> The *Life of Euthymios* also informs us of the final stages of Theophano's life; before she died she took care to see the monk also, for in November he made his final visit to the woe-laden empress whilst she was 'being nursed' at the church of the Theotokos at Blachernai, thus giving the detail of the site of her death which her own *Life* did not reveal.<sup>37</sup> The dying empress gave gifts to Euthymios; these were sacred vessels of jasper with cloths to cover them which had Euthymios's name woven on them in gold, and also Theophano's own scarf (*maphorion*) which she wore in church.<sup>38</sup> The empress is then said to have died on 10 November.<sup>39</sup> According to her *Life* Theophano was given the full imperial ceremony for her funeral, which was the occasion of a miraculous event.<sup>40</sup> When the coffin was led out of the palace through the Chalke accompanied by the emperor and the senate the weather, which had been bad and snowing, was transformed and became mild and pleasant. When however her body was entombed at the church of Holy Apostles the weather reverted to normal.

If Leo was hoping that the death of Theophano signaled the end of his illicit affair with Zoe and the legitimization of their union he was mistaken; matters were not that simple. Theoretically the emperor should have been able to proceed to a second marriage, which was legitimate in Byzantium. However he hit a snag, the character of the woman that he wished to marry and the fact that he had conducted an immoral liaison with her. Although in Byzantium a second mar-

<sup>34</sup> Karlin-Hayter, 'Théophano'.

<sup>35</sup> *VT*, 15, 13-18.

<sup>36</sup> *VT*, 16, 12-16.

<sup>37</sup> *VE*, 45, 14-17.

<sup>38</sup> *VT*, 17, 26-27, also mentions the relic of Theophano's *maphorion*, which it says was kept at the church of Holy Apostles, and was instrumental in curing the author's father of his painful feet. This may not be the same *maphorion* that the empress had given to Euthymios; presumably she could have had more than one.

<sup>39</sup> However the *Synaxarion of Constantinople* commemorates her feast on 16 December: see *AASS*, Propylaeum Novembris, 314-316.

<sup>40</sup> *VT*, 16, 25-17. 4.

riage was a possibility there were certain conditions attached; a second marriage was not allowed for the legalisation of a former concubinage.<sup>41</sup> Effectively Leo was entitled to marry a second time, just not to Zoe. This situation is explicitly stated in the *Life of Euthymios*, when Leo seeks the approval of his spiritual father for the projected marriage.<sup>42</sup> Euthymios was perfectly prepared to accept that Leo had the right to marry a second time; his point of disagreement with the emperor was over the choice of his bride. The simple truth was that Zoe Zaoutzaina had a bad reputation. Euthymios asserted that Zoe's 'evil conduct is notorious' and that if Leo did marry her then everyone would believe that the rumours about her were true. The nature of these rumours is made clear in the *Life*; it was believed that Zoe had been responsible for the deaths of both Theophano and Theodore Gouzouniates, presumably in order that she should become Leo's second wife.<sup>43</sup> The chronicles also knew of the accusation that Zoe had poisoned her husband to become the mistress of the emperor.<sup>44</sup> Leo was so enraged by Euthymios's objection to Zoe that he compelled his spiritual father to reside at the monastery of St Diomedes for a period of two years. This event again reveals the emperor's desire to have his own way, but it also suggests that he desired to have his intentions approved. However he could brook no opposition and dealt firmly with those who did obstruct him. Grumel has suggested that the abbot of the Studite monastery, Anatolios, also suffered a like fate for opposing Leo's union with Zoe, for there is an odd break in his tenure of the position as head of the monastery.<sup>45</sup> Leo himself, naturally, did not share the popular perception of Zoe's nature, and he upheld her reputation loyally whilst she was alive, and also after she was dead.

It is perhaps in the reaction against the person of Zoe that there is found the explanation for the delay of the second marriage. Euthymios was exiled for two years, and the chronicles assert that Zoe was empress for one year and eight months; from the fact that Zoe was still alive when Euthymios was released from his monastic confinement it can be deduced that Leo did not immediately marry Zoe on the death of Theophano. Here then is a case of Leo restraining his desires; perhaps he hoped that the fuss over the choice of his

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<sup>41</sup> Guiland, *Études*, 234.

<sup>42</sup> *VE*, 47. 4-30.

<sup>43</sup> *VE*, 45. 33-35.

<sup>44</sup> *GMC*, 852.

<sup>45</sup> Grumel, 'Chronologie', 29-32.

second wife would die down given time.<sup>46</sup> But Byzantine society was evidently not quick to forget the scandalous pre-history of the emperor's intended bride.<sup>47</sup> It seems that it was not until July 898 at the earliest that Leo dared to proceed to regularise their relationship by marriage<sup>48</sup>, and even then the scandalous taint had not vanished; when Leo and Zoe finally did get married it was not with the ceremony that would still have been appropriate for a second union. The patriarch Antony Kauleas apparently refused to condone the marriage by his participation, and after Leo had crowned Zoe it was a palace cleric called Sinapes who blessed the couple, and he was then deposed for his pains.<sup>49</sup> Leo had decided in the end to follow his wishes and take the plunge, and he was prepared to ride out the storm.

There are possible indications that the emperor did try and convince society that the marriage and Zoe were both perfectly respectable. One instance of this is the two poems by Leo Choirospaktes that were written about one of Leo VI's weddings.<sup>50</sup> In one of these poems Choirospaktes is insistent on the legality of the union, and this has recently been connected with the fourth marriage by Magdalino, following Kolia's line.<sup>51</sup> Yet there is a problem with this dating; at the time when Leo VI married his fourth wife Zoe Karbonopsina soon after Easter 906<sup>52</sup> Leo Choirospaktes was not

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<sup>46</sup> One wonders if Leo had a hand in the cultivation of Theophano's reputation as a saint, which began to grow shortly after her death, so as in some way to lessen the insult that had been caused to the empress by Zoe's relationship with the emperor; if Theophano had borne the scandal with ease why should it bother anyone else now that Leo wished to marry Zoe? There is perhaps also the hint that it was all part of God's will anyway, that it was He who had brought about the emperor's relationship with Stylianos's daughter. The quick growth of Theophano's cult is reflected in the fact that Leo built a church in her memory not long after her death, and that her *Life* preserves a pro-Stylianos outlook.

<sup>47</sup> Not only was there the question of whether she was a murderess but also the fact that she had been the emperor's mistress. A further problem may have been that although a second marriage for Leo was not out of the question it was a different matter when it came to Zoe, for this was also her second marriage, and the attitude of Byzantine law towards women getting married again was not the same as for men: see G. Buckler, 'Women in Byzantine Law around 1100 A. D.', *Byz*, 11 (1936), 391-416, esp. 406-408; Guiland, *Études*, 233. See also J. Beaucamp, *Staut*, II, *Les pratiques sociales* (Paris, 1992), 70, who notes that in the case of Byzantine Egypt society ignored the normative dispositions of imperial legislation.

<sup>48</sup> For the date of the second wedding see Karlin-Hayter, 'Théophano', 13.

<sup>49</sup> *GMC*, 856-857.

<sup>50</sup> *Poetae Lyrici Graeci*, III, 356-358.

<sup>51</sup> Magdalino, 'Revisited', 99.

<sup>52</sup> See Karlin-Hayter, *VE*, *Commentary*, 193, for this date.

present in Constantinople but was in fact engaged on an embassy to the east which had begun in late 904 or early 905 and lasted until 907, Choirosphaktes returning to the imperial city in February of that year.<sup>53</sup> The possibility that Choirosphaktes sent these poems to Constantinople by letter should perhaps not be ruled out, but the fact that he does allude to the legality of the union does make it unlikely that the context was that of the fourth marriage, for its legitimacy was a major point of dispute; it seems doubtful that anyone could have argued that it was legal. The context of the second marriage seems much more appropriate, for here was a wedding that was indeed theoretically legitimate since the emperor was entitled to take another wife. In 898 Choirosphaktes would have been a renowned figure at the imperial court since he had performed such sterling work for the empire through his diplomatic activity with Symeon the Bulgar.<sup>54</sup> Through his poems Choirosphaktes showed his support for the emperor and perhaps it was hoped that they would influence opinion regarding the second marriage. Another possible tactic to improve the acceptability of Zoe can be seen in the record of a miracle that occurred whilst she was empress. The miracle happened on 31 August at the church of the Theotokos at Chalkoprateia, and was a result of the laying of the relic of the girdle of the Virgin upon the empress Zoe.<sup>55</sup> This must have taken place in 898 or 899, the years when she would have been augusta in August. The 31 August was the anniversary of the dedication day of this church, where Mary's girdle was kept in the so-called holy casket (ἀγία σόρος). It is related that Zoe, who was suffering from an 'impure spirit', was the recipient of a dream wherein she was told that she would be cured if the girdle of the Virgin was laid upon her. Leo duly arranged on the encaenia day of the church that the casket was opened and that the patriarch spread the belt over the afflicted empress, who was subsequently cured.<sup>56</sup> One suspects that this was a public relations exercise, an

<sup>53</sup> Kolias, *Choerosphactès*, 47-52.

<sup>54</sup> Kolias, *Choerosphactès*, 28-42.

<sup>55</sup> AASS, Propylaeum Novembris, 935-936; *Menologion of Basil II*, PG 117, 613. See also Jugie, 'Homélies mariales', I, 485; Karlin-Hayter, *VE, Commentary*, 172-173, and 'Théophano', 13-14. It is interesting to note that the cure took place at the shrine of the church which rivaled the Blachernai's own holy soros which contained the Virgin's robe; this latter church had strong associations with Zoe's old rival Theophano.

<sup>56</sup> The accounts indicate that this was the first time the casket had been opened since the relic had been installed in Constantinople. It is related that the girdle was found as good as new, and also that within the casket there was an imperial document detailing when and how the relic had first been brought to the city by the emperor Arcadius (395-408). However the accounts also say that 410 years had elapsed from this event until Leo VI opened the casket for the performing of the

open declaration that Zoe could no longer be accused of being an evil woman since she had been cured by divine powers.<sup>57</sup> The very fact that this event could occur also suggests that opposition to Zoe as empress had lapsed somewhat, for the patriarch who would not bless the union was able to unfold the relic over her, whilst Euthymios who was exiled for his refusal to countenance Zoe as Leo's second wife seems to have been present at this ceremonial miracle.<sup>58</sup> Philotheos certainly records without any reservation the fact that Zoe was empress and was involved in court ceremonial, though perhaps this is only to be expected of a palace employee.<sup>59</sup>

Despite these efforts it is clear that Zoe never did escape from the scandal that attached to her person, even after her death. When she was buried after succumbing to an illness which was accompanied by 'the loss of her wits'<sup>60</sup> in late 899 or early 900<sup>61</sup> there was found on her coffin the following inscription, 'The miserable daughter of Babylon'.<sup>62</sup> It is unclear from the story whether the inscription was put on deliberately, or just happened to be already on the coffin that

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miracle, which is a chronological impossibility, for Arcadius died in 408, and 410 years added to this does not reach the reign of Leo VI. Jugie, 'Homélie mariales', I, 485, tried to account for this discrepancy by saying 'Le seul moyen de rendre acceptable un pareil calcul serait de faire partir les 410 ans de l'année 477 ou 478, époque à laquelle l'église de Chalcopratia a pu être bâtie par l'impératrice Vérine'. He thus concludes that Zoe must have been cured in either 887 or 888, but this hypothesis is problematic as Zoe did not become empress until 898. For the moment it seems safer to conclude that the figure of 410 years is simply an error. Further evidence for this event is supplied by a surviving homily that Leo VI's spiritual father Euthymios supposedly delivered on the feast of the girdle of the Virgin and the dedication day of the church of the Theotokos at Chalkoprateia: see Jugie, 'Homélie mariales', I, 505-514, esp. 511. In this homily Euthymios refers to the opening of the casket but he does not comment on the use the relic was put to.

<sup>57</sup> This is not to dismiss the idea that Zoe was indeed ailing, for she died not much later from 'a fearful illness': *VE*, 49, 24-25.

<sup>58</sup> Karlin-Hayter, *VE, Commentary*, 172-173, and 'Théophano', 13-14, opines that Euthymios was present on this occasion.

<sup>59</sup> Oikonomidès, *Listes*, 225, 1-2.

<sup>60</sup> *VE*, 49, 24-25.

<sup>61</sup> Grumel, 'Chronologie', 19-21, dates her death to the winter of 899-900. This was followed by Jenkins, 'Chronological Accuracy', 104, who places her death in December 899-January 900. However Karlin-Hayter, 'Théophano', 13, reached the conclusion that she died in March 900 at the earliest; she argues that since the office of basileiopatōr was included in Philotheos's treatise of September 899 Stylianos Zaoutzes must still have been alive at this date, and as Zoe is recorded as dying six months after her father the earliest her death can have been was March 900. She is less adamant though in *VE, Commentary*, 172, merely saying that 'Zoe was alive in sept. 899, but dead very soon after, to be out of the way for Leo's marriage with Eudocia'. It is possible that the office of basileiopatōr could have been included in Philotheos's work even after the death of Stylianos.

<sup>62</sup> *GMC*, 857.

was found to bury her in, but the implication is less hazy; it is a reference to Zoe's scandalous life for she is being connected with the whore of Babylon of the Book of Revelation.<sup>63</sup> It could be that Zoe had caused so much scandal that someone felt strongly enough to graffiti her tomb with such an insult. Yet Leo himself remained loyal to Zoe, who had after all saved his life on one occasion. In a vividly described episode in the *Life of Euthymios* there is related a surprise night visit of the emperor to Euthymios's monastery at Psamathia, shortly after the death of Zoe Zaoutzaina.<sup>64</sup> Leo barged in on the monks waiving all ceremony, and proceeded to join them in their customary post-prandial measure of wine, which was diluted with warm water. However the beverage was not to the emperor's liking, and on the spot he endowed the monastery with a gift of vine-growing land, saying to Euthymios "I will consecrate to this new-built monastery the property in the Pyliatic which belonged to that poor wife of mine [Zoe] whom you had in aversion; so you may be continually reminded of her and of me".<sup>65</sup> One suspects that the last thing Euthymios wanted was to be continually reminded of Zoe, and one also suspects that Leo chose the gift of this property deliberately to vaunt his attachment to Zoe in the face of his spiritual father.

Further evidence of Leo's concern for the memory of his deceased wife is found in the chronicles. They report that after the emperor had been made aware of the plot of Zoe's surviving relatives in 899/900 he managed to remove the ring-leader, Basil the *epeiktes*, from Constantinople by dispatching him to Macedonia, giving him 24,000 *miliaresia*, a sum that is described as being the *psychika* of his aunt Zoe.<sup>66</sup> Such money was to be distributed as charity and thus benefit Zoe's soul in the after-life.<sup>67</sup> The chronicle of Pseudo-Symeon even asserts that in the month of May after Zoe's death Leo, having built a church for her called Hagia Zoe, buried her there.<sup>68</sup> It is more likely that this chronicler is simply confused, or carried away, by the example of the church that Leo did build for his first wife Theophano, which is recorded immediately after the details on the church of Hagia Zoe.<sup>69</sup>

<sup>63</sup> However Runciman, *Romanus Lecapenus*, 41, considered that Zoe had had the inscription carved on her future tomb as a sign of her repentance.

<sup>64</sup> *VE*, 51, 24—55, 19.

<sup>65</sup> *VE*, 55, 15-18.

<sup>66</sup> *GMC*, 858-859.

<sup>67</sup> For another example of money being distributed for the repose of the soul see Leo's *Novel* 40: Noailles and Dain, *Les nouvelles*, 156-165.

<sup>68</sup> *Ps. Sym.*, 703.

<sup>69</sup> On the church that was built for Theophano see Downey, 'Church of All Saints'.

When the empress Zoe had been alive Leo's concern was surely not solely with the reaction of society to her; the hope for the birth of a son and heir must have occupied his mind also. A second marriage was usually the last that a Byzantine would proceed to, given the shame that would attach to a third by virtue of canon and civil law; St Basil excluded trigamists from communion for three years, and Leo VI himself had cracked down on third marriages in *Novel* 90.<sup>70</sup> Thus Leo's union with Zoe was theoretically his last chance to secure a legitimate male child of his own blood. It was the fact that this failed to happen that precipitated the major internal crisis of his reign; only one child of Leo and Zoe survived the marriage, and this was a girl named Anna.<sup>71</sup> It is indicative of the emperor's character that he did not simply accept the situation that fate had allotted him; he did not concede the point that God obviously did not wish him to have any male children (a point that the opponents of his following marriages did not fail to pick up on) but turned his mind to the securing of a third marriage. The question of why Leo was so determined to produce a male child of his own blood has not been addressed in the various writings on the tetragamy affair. The impression created is that he was motivated by the impulse of human pride; Leo could not bear the thought that a son of his would not survive him and maintain the rule of the Macedonian dynasty. Being generous one could say that Leo was concerned for the very existence of the Macedonian dynasty; the only other surviving son of Basil was the co-emperor Alexander and he too had not yet produced any children. Given later events it may however be doubted that Leo would have been content to see a son of Alexander destined for the throne.

Almost immediately after Zoe's death Leo began to turn his mind to the methods by which he might take another wife, and these methods reveal the extent of his determination and ruthlessness. Leo was aware that he first had to make the position of augusta vacant, and this necessitated ridding himself of the two females who could be expected to fill this role. The elder of these was the wife of Alexander, whose name is not known. Eliminating her claim to be chief augusta does not seem to have been too taxing; Leo accused Alexander of plotting against him and as punishment separated him from his wife,

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<sup>70</sup> Noailles and Dain, *Les nouvelles*, 296-299; Guiland, *Études*, 237.

<sup>71</sup> *GMC*, 860. *De Cer.*, 643, indicates that two daughters of Leo and Zoe were buried in the mausoleum of Constantine the Great, but it gives them both the name of Anna. A further complication is that it is not specified which Zoe is meant, the second wife or the fourth wife. Ohnsorge, 'Töchter', 79-80, believes that the fourth wife is meant, and the entry should call the daughters Anna and Helena. These problems will be returned to below; for the moment it is sufficient to state that only one child of the second marriage survived after Zoe Zaoutzaina's death.

thus terminating her chance of being augusta.<sup>72</sup> The other candidate for the position of augusta was Leo's own daughter Anna, who was still a very young child in 900 if she was born after Zoe had become empress. The fact that it is recorded that Leo had to make an excuse justifying appointing his daughter augusta may indicate the truth of her extreme infancy; the chronicles go out of their way when commenting on the creation of Anna as augusta that this step had to be taken for without her the *kletoria* would not be able to be performed according to the blue-print of court ceremony.<sup>73</sup> This excuse was in fact Leo's secret weapon; a precedent had now been set by which it was deemed that it was essential to have an augusta for the sake of imperial ceremony.<sup>74</sup> Now all Leo had to do was make an excuse to get rid of Anna and then he would be able to justify his progression to a third marriage as a state necessity. Leo put his plan into action, as revealed by a letter of the patriarch Nikolaos written in 912 to the pope Anastasios III.<sup>75</sup> Nikolaos records for the pope a conversation he had with the emperor shortly after the advent of the fourth marriage; the patriarch reports that he said to Leo "Even the third [marriage] was perhaps unworthy of your Majesty. But that perhaps found excuse in the treaty made with the Frank, because it was agreed by you that your only daughter should be sent to him as his bride...and since there must be a Lady in the Palace to manage ceremonies affecting the wives of your nobles, there is condonation of the third marriage, because your daughter was to be given away". Thus Nikolaos presents a very neat précis of the justification for the third marriage. To make the position of augusta vacant once more Leo had arranged a marriage between Anna and the Carolingian Louis of Provence, on the pattern that often occurred between Byzantium and the west, the last projected union being that between Basil I's son Constantine and the daughter of Louis II.<sup>76</sup> Both Previt -Orton and

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<sup>72</sup> *VE*, 55. 21-24. It may be felt that such an interpretation of events is too cynical. Alexander may indeed have been plotting against Leo, for it was certainly a moment that was favourable for the co-emperor. His brother had had his allotted two wives and had not managed to produce a son, so it now surely fell to Alexander to provide the heir of the Macedonian dynasty; why not just speed the inevitable by seizing power for himself? If Alexander was plotting it was extremely opportune for his brother. By discrediting himself Alexander had brought Leo one step closer to justifying the taking of a third wife; Alexander may have been plotting but Leo chose to exploit the situation by acting against Alexander's wife.

<sup>73</sup> *GMC*, 860.

<sup>74</sup> For a comparable precedent see the case of the remarriage of Michael II: *TC*, 78-79.

<sup>75</sup> *Nicholas. Letters*, 218-221.

<sup>76</sup> For comment on this latter proposed union see Kreutz, *Before the Normans*, 42, and 172 n. 32.

Ohnsorge have directed their attention to this question of the marriage of Leo's daughter, and both assume that it came to pass, though this can be debated.<sup>77</sup> Whatever is concluded about the projected union the point to recognise here is that Leo made an excuse to remove his daughter from the position of *augusta* so that he could justify a third marriage, exploiting the pretext that a woman was essential in the palace for the sake of imperial ceremony. The workings of Leo's mind were already appreciated by Grumel who saw the separation of Alexander from his wife and the promotion of Anna as a move against the co-emperor, though he did not extend his analysis to the subsequent engagement of Anna.<sup>78</sup>

A further point regarding the third marriage made clear in Nikolaos's letter is the attitude of canon law to such an event. Despite

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<sup>77</sup> Previt -Orton, 'Charles Constantine'; Ohnsorge, 'T chter'. Previt -Orton was of the opinion that the union did occur, and argued that this would explain why the son of Louis of Provence, Charles Constantine, had aspersions cast on his birth, for his mother had been the product of a scandalous marriage and his grandfather's [Leo VI's] own parentage had been dubious, and also why he had such a Byzantine name. Previt -Orton did however point out the difficulty in this theory, the question of Anna's age. Ohnsorge believed he had found the answer to this problem by conjecturing that Anna was born to Leo and Zoe before they were married, and thus it was perfectly feasible that Anna could have married in 900 and given birth to Charles Constantine in 906, dying in the process (explaining why Louis is found in 915 with another wife, Adelaide). Ohnsorge's explanation has the added bonus of furthering Charles's shameful origins, since his own mother would then be illegitimate. However it seems that Previt -Orton and Ohnsorge have taken it for granted that Anna did marry Louis; forgetting the problem of her age, there seems to be no concrete evidence that the marriage occurred. It is interesting to note that Nikolaos only talks of the marriage as something that was meant to happen, he does not say that it came to pass. It was sufficient for Leo's purposes to make the excuse of an impending union; he was concerned primarily to create a climate in which his remarriage could be excused. Gay, *Italie m ridionale*, I, 153-155, believed that the marriage between Anna and Louis remained a project, but then he is mistaken in placing the marriage negotiations prior to Anna's *augustaship*; Karlin-Hayter, *VE, Commentary*, 178, states that it was either Anna's marriage or death that made the position of *augusta* vacant. It must be acknowledged that the vast majority of marriages proposed between westerners and Byzantines never came to fruition. If it is accepted that the marriage remained a proposal then the age of Anna is no longer an issue; it was possible for the emperor to engage his daughter to be married at some point in the future when she had reached the appropriate maturity. As with the example of Leo's brother Constantine this would have been a case of child betrothal. As for Anna's true fate it seems likely that she died at an early age, and was buried in the family mausoleum at the church of the Holy Apostles as the *De Cer.* records. The repetition of the name Anna may be an error, or Leo and Zoe Zaoutzaina may indeed have had another daughter who died young.

<sup>78</sup> Grumel, 'Chronologie', 32-34. His conjecture that Samonas aided Leo in the slandering of Alexander and the achievement of the separation is wrong, since chronologically impossible; the steps against Alexander must have occurred very shortly after Zoe's death, whilst Samonas only came to Leo's attention and service in 900 in the context of the plot of the relatives of the deceased empress.

the ruling of St Basil Nikolaos was able to assert that “the sacred canons do not wholly reject the third marriage, but condone it, even though averting their eyes—as it were—from a ‘smear on the church’”.<sup>79</sup> A third marriage then was not beyond the realms of possibility, and there was in Byzantium an imperial precedent for such a union, though not a very salubrious one; the iconoclastic emperor Constantine V (741-775) took a third wife.<sup>80</sup> Leo was not yet entering uncharted waters, though it still seems rather surprising that there appears to have been no significant reaction against this union. One group that was highly alarmed about this state of affairs was that of the surviving relatives of the defunct empress Zoe, who to some extent secured and maintained their positions within society by virtue of their prominent relative. They realised that a new wife would probably mean new favourites and consequently felt threatened. The chroniclers narrate that the plot hatched by Zoe’s relatives was inspired by their fear that they had had their day. The ring-leader of the group was Basil the *epeiktēs* who was the nephew of Zoe Zaoutzaina, and who allegedly wished to become emperor.<sup>81</sup> It is related that he enlisted Samonas, a eunuch servant in the house of Stylianos, to aid in the plot. Leo’s ambition to take another wife thus gave rise to a plot that could have proved fatal for him, if Samonas had not turned informer. So at the same time as the advent of the third marriage the prestige of the Zaoutzes family came to an end; a new broom was sweeping through Byzantium.

One of the most intriguing aspects of the third marriage is that nothing is known of the powers behind this new broom; the figure of the third wife, Eudokia Baiane, is shrouded in mystery. All the chroniclers say is that ‘The emperor fetched a maiden from the Opsikion theme, who was most beautiful indeed; her name was Eudokia, and he crowned, entitled and married her’.<sup>82</sup> Given the language of this brief account of the choice of Eudokia it has been conjectured that this was another case of a bride-show, but this can be doubted even if one does believe in their existence.<sup>83</sup> This leaves

<sup>79</sup> *Nicholas. Letters*, 220. 84-86.

<sup>80</sup> See Guiland, *Études*, 239. Another emperor who married three times is Constantius II (337-361): see *ODB*, 524.

<sup>81</sup> For the episode see *GMC*, 858-859.

<sup>82</sup> *GMC*, 860. The family name of Eudokia is not revealed by the tenth-century chroniclers, but appears in *VE*, 63. 13, and also in *De Cer.*, 643.

<sup>83</sup> For the conjecture that the third wife was selected by bride-show see Treadgold, ‘Bride-Shows’, 408-409. Treadgold, although believing in the existence of bride-shows, doubts that Eudokia was selected in such a manner, commenting that ‘the words of Theophanes Continuatus prove nothing, since an emperor does not need a bride-show to find a beautiful woman to marry, or to bring her from a province not far from his capital’.

the question of how Eudokia did come to be chosen as Leo's bride. Schreiner takes the view that the emperor selected Eudokia simply because she was beautiful, but this fails to satisfy; whilst stringently maintaining that family was not a consideration in the choice of brides Schreiner fails to mention the fact that Eudokia was of the Baianos family.<sup>84</sup> Surely there must have been some mechanism whereby Leo already knew of Eudokia's existence, and the most likely explanation is that he was acquainted with other members of her family. However no other members of the Baianos family are met in the reign of Leo VI, though others from earlier and later periods are known.<sup>85</sup> No obvious promotions are made whilst she is empress which could aid in determining her network. Her premature death may have obscured such details. Why Leo chose Eudokia remains then an open question. Perhaps like Theophano she was selected since she was safe, she did not have extensive potentially-dangerous connections; Leo could have learnt his lesson from the example of the family of Zaoutzes.

Another odd facet about the third marriage is, as Karlin-Hayter phrases it, 'the scarcely documented reaction' of society to it<sup>86</sup>; there seems to be no evidence that it caused a fuss. Jenkins asserts that 'the complaisant Patriarch Antony Cauleas...without very much ado, issued a 'dispensation' which freed the emperor from the canonical penalties entailed by third unions'<sup>87</sup>, whilst Karlin-Hayter comments that 'The third marriage took place in the patriarchate of Kauleas and was probably celebrated by him'.<sup>88</sup> Such deductions are a matter of inference. It is however known that the marriage must have occurred around Easter 900, for Eudokia died the following year on 12 April having been empress for only one year.<sup>89</sup> As to why there was

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<sup>84</sup> Schreiner, 'Réflexions', 190.

<sup>85</sup> See Herlong, *Social Mobility*, 81. He notes that 'Eudocia's family is not well documented', but that some members are to be found. A seal dating to 650-870 names a Baianos who was a *patrikios* and a *strategos*. Also around 870 the *strategos* of Longobardia had a protostrator named Baianos, whilst another Baianos, described as a wealthy and noble inhabitant of Asia Minor, had his property confiscated in 1034 by Michael IV. Herlong also notes that the name may be of Bulgarian origin since the brother of khan Toktu, who was killed in 772, was called Baianos.

<sup>86</sup> Karlin-Hayter, *VE, Commentary*, 183.

<sup>87</sup> Jenkins, *Imperial Centuries*, 214-215.

<sup>88</sup> Karlin-Hayter, *VE, Commentary*, 183. A. Cutler and N. Oikonomidès, 'An Imperial Casket and Its Fate at a Humanist's Hands', *The Art Bulletin*, 70 (1988), 77-87, esp. 85, tie in the production of the Palazzo Venezia casket with the occasion of Leo's third marriage, and point to an inscription on the casket that suggests that the wedding was blessed by the patriarch. However Kalavrezou, 'New Type', denied that the casket was produced on the occasion of a wedding, and agrees with Maguire, 'Comparing', in linking the casket with Basil I.

<sup>89</sup> Karlin-Hayter, *VE, Commentary*, 183.

apparently no opposition there are several detectable factors. There was the careful groundwork of Leo VI himself; the precedent of Constantine V; there may have been a certain sympathy with Leo's plight; also the choice of Eudokia was probably more pleasing than that of Zoe; and the example of the patriarch's apparent toleration of the marriage may have set the tone.<sup>90</sup> An element of opposition may perhaps be detected in the projected trial of Arethas in 900.<sup>91</sup> From letters of Arethas it is known that he was put on trial on 19 April 900 on a charge on atheism, a charge that commonly disguised other motivations. The trial took the form of an ecclesiastical tribunal and sat in the *metatorion* (imperial robing room) of Hagia Sophia. The prosecutor was Nikolaos Xylomachairios (although Jenkins and Laourdas assert that the emperor was the real instigator of the action) and the judges included the *synkellos* Euthymios, Christopher the bishop of Cyzicus and also Nikolaos the *mystikos*. The prosecution broke down thanks to the intervention of John Rhabdouchos. Jenkins and Laourdas saw in the trial an indication that Arethas had been involved in an actual plot against the emperor, either that of the Zaoutzes family or that of Alexander. Yet given that Arethas was initially the prime mover in the opposition against the fourth marriage, and the closeness in date between the third marriage and his trial it could be that in 900 Arethas was already objecting to the emperor's behaviour. If he was it seems however that he was effectively silenced; in the period 901-902 he delivered orations at Leo's court.<sup>92</sup> In addition to this possible manifestation of resistance Karlin-Hayter alludes to the opposition of 'some circles'<sup>93</sup>, a conclusion based on the problems surrounding the burial of Eudokia.

With the third marriage safely secured things looked even better for Leo when it emerged that Eudokia had become pregnant. During Easter 901 she gave birth to a baby boy, who was called Basil.<sup>94</sup> Any joy that Leo felt was however marred, first by the death of Eudokia during the birth and then by the death of the child too. The depth of anguish and despair that Leo was hurled into can only be imagined.

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<sup>90</sup> Perhaps Antony Kauleas had some vested interest in recognising Eudokia as empress and a legitimate wife.

<sup>91</sup> For this trial see Jenkins and Laourdas, 'Eight Letters', 349-351.

<sup>92</sup> See Jenkins, Laourdas and Mango, 'Nine Orations', 1-2.

<sup>93</sup> Karlin-Hayter, *VE, Commentary*, 183.

<sup>94</sup> *VE*, 63. 13-14; *GMC*, 860; *De Cer.*, 643, where he is referred to as the brother of Constantine Porphyrogenetos; Grierson, 'Tombs', 22, 28. The choice of name seems significant; Leo was not intent on connecting himself with Michael III or with creating a 'new Constantine', all he wanted to do was stress the continuity of the Macedonian dynasty.

His mood is reflected in his insistence on a public imperial funeral for Eudokia.<sup>95</sup> At first he had planned to bury her in his recently-built monastery of St Lazaros, which was linked to the Macedonian palace complex.<sup>96</sup> However the abbot of this establishment, Hierotheos, refused to let the body be brought in past the gate and sent it back to the palace. The funeral was rescheduled for the following day, Easter day itself. The plan was to bury Eudokia with the customary imperial ceremony in the mausoleum of Constantine the Great at the church of Holy Apostles, where Leo's first two wives had already been buried. The exact reason for Hierotheos's decision to turn the body away is unclear; was it because it was Easter or because the third marriage did have a certain shame attached to it? The *Life of Euthymios* indicates that the former was the major factor, for when requested to attend the funeral by the emperor Euthymios implored Leo in a letter not to bury Eudokia on Easter day, saying "do not, on the glorious and august day of the Resurrection, bring a cloud over your royal city, making the brightness and joy of our common salvation and resurrection give way before lamentation and wailing of mourners".<sup>97</sup> Leo's recorded reply is equally worth relating, illustrating his mood and character; the emperor retorted "where has your Holiness read that the dead should not be buried on Easter day?...tomorrow it is my will she should be borne, as empress, followed by the Senate, in royal state, to the grave, and I will show this populous city that Eudocia, empress of the Romans, is dead, that among them at least I may find fellow-mourners and sharers of my grief".<sup>98</sup> Thus Leo pursued his own will despite any religious qualms that may have existed, asserting his imperial authority and moved by the tragedy of his own circumstances.

With the death of his first wife and his first son the emperor might have been expected to resign himself finally to his fate. He had had the maximum number of wives that was precedented in Byzantine history; to go beyond this would be unheard of. Realising this Leo acted with due caution, but it is obvious that he was still determined to have a son. By 903 he had taken a lover, Zoe Karbonopsina; the chroniclers report that when Leo was nearly assassinated in the church of St Mokios on 11 May 903<sup>99</sup> his trusted saviour Samonas was not present, but was escorting Zoe to the palace.<sup>100</sup> Leo was

<sup>95</sup> For this episode see *VE*, 63. 18—65. 23.

<sup>96</sup> Magdalino, 'Revisited', 99.

<sup>97</sup> *VE*, 63. 34—65. 2.

<sup>98</sup> *VE*, 65. 14-22.

<sup>99</sup> Grumel, 'Chronologie', 40-41.

<sup>100</sup> *GMC*, 861.

immersing himself in more scandal<sup>101</sup>, but at least he was holding off from the novelty of a fourth marriage. Indeed he was deliberately doing so, making sure he had secured a son before taking that unprecedented step. The chronicles also state that Zoe lived with the emperor as wife, but she was not crowned.<sup>102</sup> She only became Leo's fourth wife when she married him in 906 after the birth and baptism of their child Constantine.

Unlike the case of Eudokia Baiane information on Zoe's background does exist. She was apparently descended from the family of the chronicler Theophanes<sup>103</sup>, and was great-granddaughter of Photeinos the *protospatharios* and *strategos* of the Anatolikon theme under Michael II (820-829), who also became *strategos* of both Crete and Sicily.<sup>104</sup> Of her relatives who lived under Leo VI the most famous is Himerios. He had risen to the post of *protasekretis* by 904, at which date he was put in charge of the Byzantine navy.<sup>105</sup> He owed his connection to Zoe through marriage to her sister<sup>106</sup>, a marriage which must have occurred at the latest just after the settling of the tetragamy crisis for he is identified as her relative then by the *Life of Euthymios*.<sup>107</sup> A further relation of Zoe was a *patrikios* named Nikolaos<sup>108</sup>, and Leo Choirosphaktes seems also to have had a family connection with Zoe.<sup>109</sup>

With his concubine installed in the palace Leo hoped to secure a male heir, and in September 905<sup>110</sup> a boy was born<sup>111</sup>, who was named Constantine. This child was eventually to succeed to the

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<sup>101</sup> In *Novel* 91 Leo had advocated the outlawing of concubinage: see Noailles and Dain, *Les nouvelles*, 298-301.

<sup>102</sup> *GMC*, 862.

<sup>103</sup> *DAI*, I, 98, 77-80.

<sup>104</sup> *TC*, 76. Herlong, *Social Mobility*, 104, conjectures that he was a brother or nephew of Theophanes.

<sup>105</sup> *GMC*, 863; *VE*, 109, 25.

<sup>106</sup> Flusin, 'Fragment', I, 129, 98-99.

<sup>107</sup> *VE*, 109, 25-26.

<sup>108</sup> *VE*, 109, 25-26.

<sup>109</sup> Kolias, *Choerosphactès*, letter 23, 115, 29-30.

<sup>110</sup> See Jenkins, 'Chronological Accuracy', 108-109. D. Pingree, 'The Horoscope of Constantine VII Pophyrogenitus', *DOP*, 27 (1973), 217-231, esp. 229, has identified a horoscope as being that of the child Constantine, which reveals his birth to have occurred on 3 September 905.

<sup>111</sup> Ohnsorge, 'Töchter', argues that prior to the birth of Constantine Zoe and Leo had produced two daughters, Anna and Helena, basing his conclusion on the entry in the *De Cer.* about the tomb of two daughters of Leo and a Zoe, and also an inscription found in Constantinople referring to the porphyrogenetoi Leo, Alexander, Constantine, Anna, Helena and Maria. For discussion of the tomb of the Annas see n. 77 above. As for the Anna and Helena of the inscription they are more likely to be sisters of Leo VI, like Maria.

throne as the emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenetos. Given that the child was the product of such a scandalous union it comes as a surprise that so many pious figures are linked with his birth; the line up includes the patriarch Nikolaos, the sainted nun Euphrosyne, certain holy men, the abbot of the monastery of St Athenogenes, and an icon of the Mother of God at Pege. It is likely however that some of these incidences were inventions of a later time, when Constantine VII had become emperor, inventions that were intended to reveal that his birth was divinely approved. The involvement of Euphrosyne the Younger in the securing of a male child for Leo is known from her *Life* that was written in the fourteenth century by Nikephoros Kallistos.<sup>112</sup> Attached to this work was an account of various miracles that had occurred throughout Byzantine history at the holy site of Pege, and one of these miracles involving an icon of the Theotokos touches on the birth of Constantine.<sup>113</sup> The case of the monastery of St Athenogenes was exploited by Constantine himself<sup>114</sup>, and it may be the same incident that Leo VI refers to when he warns Constantine Doukas against trying to seize power.<sup>115</sup> Such stories cannot be argued with certainty to be a true reflection of the events and sentiments of Leo's reign; for this it is natural to turn to the last and significant case of the patriarch Nikolaos.

Nikolaos, the spiritual brother of Leo and his one time fellow student, had become patriarch on 1 March 901 after the death of Antony Kauleas in the same year on 12 February.<sup>116</sup> His attitude to the pregnant Zoe is detailed in the *Life of Euthymios*. Nikolaos is alleged to have said to Euthymios on the occasion of the baptism of the boy

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<sup>112</sup> *AASS*, Nov III, 858-877, esp. 870. Chapters 17-33 concern Leo VI and his relationship with Euphrosyne. Euphrosyne had come to settle at the church of the Theotokos at Pege at the start of the tenth century, and she took up residence in a subterranean cave there. Leo, on hearing of her reputation, visited her and eventually asked her to intercede with God on his behalf, to secure for him a son. Subsequently Euphrosyne did have a vision and was informed that God would allow Leo to have a son who would become emperor.

<sup>113</sup> *De sacris aedibus deque miraculis Deiparae ad Fontem*, *AASS*, Nov III, 878-889, esp. 885. It is related that in her quest for a child Zoe fabricated a plait which had the same measurements of the icon of the Theometor which hung on the right of an icon of the Saviour at the Refuge (a building at Pege which Leo VI had much restored), and by virtue of wearing this plait she gave birth to Constantine.

<sup>114</sup> *TC*, 464. It was said that Leo VI had gone to Mt Olympos in Bithynia to make the request to be given a son who would succeed him, and Peter the abbot of the monastery predicted to him that this would indeed come to pass.

<sup>115</sup> *TC*, 373. There was a prediction circulating that a Constantine would become emperor, and Doukas is told that this was not a reference to him but to Leo's son, a fact the emperor said he had been assured of 'by many holy men'.

<sup>116</sup> Grumel, 'Chronologie', 10.

“in this child Constantine you see the fruit of prayer. For even now, in our generation, there are men who truly are servants of God. Seven priest we instructed to remain for as many days in this great and holy temple of the Wisdom of God, their faces turned to the altar, daily by their prayers propitiating God the holy One, and thus we caused the emperor to obtain that he desired. And behold we rejoice with him that he has a beloved son”.<sup>117</sup> In connection with these prayers it seems that Nikolaos also blessed Zoe’s womb and supposedly said “The Church shall be yet further enlarged and made brilliant under the prince sprung from you”; it is also related that he predicted that the child would be a boy, and that at this time he dined with Zoe.<sup>118</sup> As a friend of the emperor it appears that Nikolaos had been prepared to help Leo in his ambitions, even to pander to them.

Public reaction to the birth of Constantine is not recorded, but when Leo aimed to have Constantine baptised with full ceremonial in Hagia Sophia ripples of disapproval are attested. Nikolaos asserts that archpriests and priests did not want him to baptise the child unless he secured from the emperor in advance a guarantee that he would separate from Zoe, and he alleges that the emperor agreed to these terms on oath.<sup>119</sup> Despite this arrangement there was still some concern, for the *Life of Euthymios* reports that the patriarch-endorsed baptism went ahead on 6 January (the feast of Epiphany) 906<sup>120</sup> ‘in spite of strong opposition on the part of Epiphanius of Laodicea who, with some of the metropolitans, stood out against it’.<sup>121</sup> Leo was depending for success on the co-operation of the patriarch, but he had also taken steps to blunt the protest by ensuring that Arethas (who was now bishop of Caesarea<sup>122</sup>) was out of Constantinople at the time.<sup>123</sup> The baptism was a coup for Leo, as it secured legitimacy for Constantine.<sup>124</sup> Not only had the emperor persuaded the patriarch to partici-

<sup>117</sup> *VE*, 71. 19-26.

<sup>118</sup> For these details see *VE*, 81. 11-17.

<sup>119</sup> *Nicholas. Letters*, 218. 45-51.

<sup>120</sup> For this date see Jenkins, ‘Chronological Accuracy’, 105.

<sup>121</sup> *VE*, 71. 12-14.

<sup>122</sup> Jenkins, Laourdas and Mango, ‘Nine Orations’, 2-3, argue that Arethas acquired this post at the end of 902. Perhaps the appointment in itself had been a means by which Leo had hoped to keep Arethas sweet.

<sup>123</sup> *ASM*, II, 110. 17-20; Jenkins and Laourdas, ‘Eight Letters’, 335-336. Arethas had been sent off to Hellas on a mission to purify churches there after the Arab assaults of recent years.

<sup>124</sup> Leo may also have tried to stress Constantine’s legitimacy by calling him porphyrogennetos: see Flusin, ‘Fragment’, I, 129. 95. See also the comments of Dagron, ‘Pourpre’, 116.

pate but also the *synkellos* Euthymios; the often-obstructive monk even consented to be one of Constantine's godfathers.<sup>125</sup>

So now Leo had achieved his aim of having a son of his own blood, and had had him recognised as legitimate through patriarchal baptism. If the emperor had stopped here all would have been well. But Leo did not stop; he refused to give up the mother of Constantine, despite his supposed agreement with Nikolaos. Three days after the baptism Zoe was back in the palace.<sup>126</sup> Leo seems to have been aware of the need to counteract the perceived scandal of his personal life. At this time he made a demonstration of his disapproval of licentiousness: he converted Kuphe from a den of prostitutes into a charitable institution for the elderly.<sup>127</sup> Whether this tactic had any effect is unknown, such information lost amidst the breaking of the full storm; after Easter 906, and before 1 May, Leo took the fateful step of marrying for a fourth time.<sup>128</sup> The couple were blessed by the presbyter Thomas, who was subsequently deposed.<sup>129</sup>

Canon law was clear that to go beyond three marriages was an abhorrent act, and before Leo no one indeed had ventured as far.<sup>130</sup> The price that Leo faced for this fourth marriage was a ban from

<sup>125</sup> *VE*, 71, 14-16. *GMC*, 865, reveals that the other sponsors included the co-emperor Alexander and the ubiquitous Samonas, as well as 'all the leading men'. The *Life of Euphrosyne* alleges that Euphrosyne became Constantine's godmother: *AASS*, Nov III, 870.

<sup>126</sup> *Nicholas. Letters*, 218, 52-54.

<sup>127</sup> *GMC*, 865. See D. J. Constantelos, *Byzantine Philanthropy and Social Welfare* (New Brunswick, New Jersey, 1968), 233. Leo's action recalls a similar tactic used by the empress and ex-prostitute Theodora in the sixth century; prostitution was cracked down on in the city, and a house of reform was established for these women: see Dewing, *Procopius*, VI (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1935), 198-199, VII (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1940), 74-77.

<sup>128</sup> For the date see Karlin-Hayter, *VE, Commentary*, 193. She had proposed 'around June' as the time of the marriage but in fact the terminus ante quem must be 1 May, as Nikolaos was offering to receive Leo back in church on the anniversary of the encaenia of the Nea, which was 1 May.

<sup>129</sup> *GMC*, 865. See also H. Grégoire, 'Thomas Dephourkinos du monastère de Kyminas et le quatrième mariage de Léon VI le sage', *Byz*, 32 (1962), 381-386. The date of the deposition of Thomas is unclear. According to *VE*, 109, 32-111. 1, it was Euthymios who removed this priest from his post, whereas the natural implication of the chronicles is that he was deposed immediately after performing the ceremony. Perhaps Euthymios simply ratified the ban when he became patriarch in 907.

<sup>130</sup> Guiland, *Études*, 235-236. Most of the classic studies on the fourth marriage refer to the law against fourth marriages in Basil I's *Procheiron*, but this was an interpolation by Leo VI in 907: see N. Oikonomidès, 'Leo VI's Legislation of 907 Forbidding Fourth Marriages. An Interpolation in the *Procheiros Nomos* (IV, 25-27)', *DOP*, 30 (1976), 173-193.

church, excommunication. One wonders why Leo was prepared to risk such a high price, why he would deliberately undermine his authority by bringing such shame on himself, and indeed why he felt such a step necessary given that he had already secured the legitimacy of Constantine through baptism. Magdalino has indeed pondered this last question, asserting that 'Leo's reasons for marrying have not satisfactorily been explained'.<sup>131</sup> He discounts that the marriage was needed to legitimise Constantine, for this had already been secured. Magdalino is prepared to admit that love for Zoe formed part of the emperor's decision, but locates the main reason in the personality of the emperor, saying 'he [Leo] believed himself more canonical than the canons'. Perhaps however Magdalino has been too hasty in underplaying the legitimisation and love factors. Technically Constantine had been legitimised by the patriarchal baptism, but was this enough? Perhaps Leo felt it vital that the mother of his child was not a figure of disgrace, and thus was keen to legitimise Zoe's position too.<sup>132</sup> More compelling is Macrides's comment that 'The best way to secure an illegitimate child's future was to legitimise him by marrying his mother'.<sup>133</sup> The love motive may be stronger than is realised too, for it seems that it could even move Leo to corruption.<sup>134</sup> Ultimately however all these motives can be reduced to one factor, not so much that Leo saw himself as above the canons, but simply that he was determined to do as he wished; he wanted to have his cake and eat it too. He did not want to pay the price for securing Constantine's baptism; Zoe was to remain in the palace and become his wife and empress.

It was this desire that was at the root of the tetragamy crisis; if only Leo would give up Zoe the crisis would be ended.<sup>135</sup> But the emperor would not contemplate such a move, and set about winning dispensa-

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<sup>131</sup> Magdalino, 'Revisited', 114.

<sup>132</sup> After economy was granted to Leo in 907 he was still anxious that Zoe should be recognised by the church as *augusta*: see *VE*, 109. 24—113. 27.

<sup>133</sup> R. Macrides, 'Artificial and Illegitimate Ties of Kinship' (unpublished paper).

<sup>134</sup> See *DAI*, I, 244. 235-256. Here it is related that an old cleric Ktenas attempted to bribe Leo through the intermediary of the *parakoimomenos* Samonas (thus dating the story to 907-908) with forty pounds of gold to make him a *protospatharios*. At first the emperor turned this offer down, but when Ktenas threw in a pair of ear-rings and a silver table Leo was won over. The addition of the ear-rings that helped to clinch the deal suggests the factor of a woman; perhaps Leo wanted to give them to Zoe.

<sup>135</sup> Not only does Nikolaos's letter make this clear, but so too does a letter of Arethas written in the period May-December 906: *ASM*, II, 67. 7—68. 8; Jenkins and Laourdas, 'Eight Letters', 356.

tion for himself. Leo's main tactic<sup>136</sup> was to summon to Constantinople a synod of the whole church, which would then grant him economy. To this end agents were dispatched to the other sees of Rome, Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem to inform their patriarchs of Leo's situation and get them to agree to consent to economy. With the promise of agreeing to economy secured the patriarchs were to send word of this to the forthcoming synod through writs and representatives. This undertaking was entrusted to two men, Symeon *asekretis* in the west, and Leo Choroiphaktes in the east.<sup>137</sup> This plan was one that was devised by the emperor and the patriarch together. At this point then Nikolaos was working with Leo<sup>138</sup>, though he later said he had done this in the expectation that the synod would not grant the emperor economy and so he would be forced to give Zoe up. The *Life of Euthymios* depicts him as a rather more enthusiastic supporter; he devised letters and responses to the opposing metropolitans whom he said he could win over<sup>139</sup>, and he even offered to receive the emperor in church on 1 May (the anniversary of the dedication of the Nea) and then again on 6 August (the feast of the Transfiguration).<sup>140</sup> Significantly a source other than the *Life of Euthymios* attests that on the evening of Christmas day 906 Nikolaos was working towards the goal of economy, trying to win over those who opposed the emperor's marriage.<sup>141</sup>

Regarding the nature of the opposition the leader of the protesters was Arethas, and other figures were Epiphanius, Niketas David the Paphlagonian (an ex-pupil of Arethas), and various unnamed metropolitans. Arethas himself indicates that only a small group formed this opposition<sup>142</sup>, though Nikolaos maintained that the

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<sup>136</sup> As in other disputes over religious issues the exploitation of apparently favourable texts was made. The patriarch Nikolaos came up with a letter of Athanasius that could be used to justify the recognition of the union 'after a certain punishment': see *VE*, 73. 10-15. Arethas indicates that Leo sought support from Dionysius (archbishop of Alexandria c. 200-265) who interpreted St Paul's ruling on marriages liberally: see *ASM*, II, 105-107; Jenkins and Laourdas, 'Eight Letters', 367-368, who wonder if the ruling of Dionysius is the text that the *VE* ascribes to Athanasius. It is also clear that the bishop of Pharsalus interpreted I Corinthians, 7. 1-2, in favour of the emperor: see Westerink, 'Niketas the Paphlagonian', 360.

<sup>137</sup> See *VE*, 79. 21-27, 87. 5-13, 101. 7-29.

<sup>138</sup> *Nicholas. Letters*, 222. 114-123.

<sup>139</sup> *VE*, 81. 18-24.

<sup>140</sup> *VE*, 71. 27-73. 3. Leo however refused these offers and decided to await the decision of the synod. Arethas confirms that Nikolaos offered to receive Leo in church and that the emperor declined: see *ASM*, II, 128. 19-22.

<sup>141</sup> See *ASM*, II, 168-174; Westerink, 'Niketas the Paphlagonian', 359.

<sup>142</sup> *ASM*, II, 60. 27-61. 19, 90. 2-9; Jenkins and Laourdas, 'Eight Letters', 353, 360.

fourth marriage caused uproar in the whole city.<sup>143</sup> The emperor knew that Arethas was the focus of the trouble and tried to neutralise him, both through his supporters<sup>144</sup> and by the threat of reviving the charge of atheism.<sup>145</sup> However the problem of Arethas and his allies paled into insignificance with the emergence of the main stumbling block to Leo's planned economy-granting synod, the patriarch Nikolaos himself.

It is important to stress that it must always be borne in mind that a great deal of what is known about both Nikolaos and the events surrounding the fourth marriage is by virtue of the evidence of the *Life of Euthymios*. It is all too easy to fall under the spell of the account of the tetragamy that the author of this text weaves so compellingly, an account where Nikolaos is treacherous, Leo is sympathetic and Euthymios is blameless. The whole thrust of the *Life* was aimed at setting forth how Euthymios came to be embroiled in the tetragamy crisis and the fact that he was innocent throughout. That Nikolaos's own account of the affair is so obviously biased in his favour makes it easy to fall back on the apparent truth of the *Life of Euthymios*. Armed with this warning the question of the volte-face of Nikolaos and the deepening crisis concerning the fourth marriage can be considered.

The reason for Nikolaos's change of attitude is hard to fathom. The *Life of Euthymios* alleges that the patriarch had only been a supporter of Leo in the first place since he was trying to appease him for having been implicated in a plot with Andronikos Doukas to take the throne, and it was when Nikolaos got wind of the fact that Leo was going to depose him anyway after the tetragamy issue had been settled by the synod that he turned to opposition.<sup>146</sup> Nikolaos himself claims that he had always had deep reservations about the issue<sup>147</sup>, and the *Life of Euthymios* reports that he said he changed his mind when he saw the obstinacy of the opposition that faced Leo.<sup>148</sup> What-

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<sup>143</sup> *Nicholas. Letters*, 218. 62-64. Nikolaos's testimony is more open to doubt than Arethas's, for Nikolaos was trying to convince the pope that a dispensation should never have been granted. Further, why would Arethas lie about the extent of the opposition?

<sup>144</sup> The purpose of Nikolaos's meeting with Niketas on Christmas day was to influence Arethas through his pupil, but the meeting itself was a recognition of the importance of Niketas's role in the opposition: see Westerink, 'Niketas the Paphlagonian', 359; Jenkins, 'Three Documents', 232.

<sup>145</sup> *ASM*, II, 97. 26-98. 10, 103. 32-104. 12; Jenkins and Laourdas, 'Eight Letters', 366, 369-370.

<sup>146</sup> *VE*, 73. 23-75. 13.

<sup>147</sup> *Nicholas. Letters*, 218. 65-222. 123.

<sup>148</sup> *VE*, 81. 7-10.

ever the cause Leo now had a serious problem on his hands; it had seemed as if things were going to turn out as he wished, with the patriarchs of all the sees granting him economy, but now his key ally had turned against him. By Christmas 906 it is apparent that favourable word was coming from both east and west regarding the granting of economy, and this may explain the odd scenario of Leo the excommunicated emperor attempting to gain admittance to the nave of Hagia Sophia, only to be turned away at the imperial doors by the patriarch, who forced him to divert to the *metatorion*. Perhaps it was this attempt by Leo to force the ending of his excommunication without the prior agreement of the patriarch that made Nikolaos begin to question his support of the emperor. The situation was repeated on the feast of Epiphany, though in this instance the *Life of Euthymios* alleges that Nikolaos had promised to receive Leo on that day<sup>149</sup>; instead the patriarch humiliated the emperor. The *Life of Euthymios* reports that Nikolaos's example was forced on or followed by the other metropolitans, for he made them agree in writing to oppose the emperor.<sup>150</sup> This situation jeopardised the plan that Leo had worked for; without the agreement of the patriarch at the forthcoming synod it would fail. Leo was impelled to act to save the situation.<sup>151</sup>

According to the *Life of Euthymios* the emperor resorted to a personal appeal to the patriarch and the metropolitans.<sup>152</sup> He summoned them all to the palace on the evening of Epiphany; only Arethas and Epiphanius refused to attend. With this captive audience Leo made his case in a beautifully stage-managed affair. He asked why Nikolaos had refused to admit him to church, given that he had received the concession of the other sees and that Nikolaos had once been his ally. Then Leo invited the bishops into his private apartments, relating to them the tragic misfortunes of his married life, and showing them the child Constantine, whom he gave to each of them to bless and pray over. After the bishops had held the child Leo took his son in his arms and weeping he uttered a poem that moved his audience to weep also with pity. Having thus moved the bishops Leo declared that all he wished for was to be admitted to the church as far as the altar railings. It is alleged that some of the metropolitans were

<sup>149</sup> For the instances of Leo being turned away to the *metatorion* see *VE*, 75. 15—79. 6.

<sup>150</sup> *VE*, 83. 4-19.

<sup>151</sup> The chronicles indicate that Leo's main ally was now Samonas: *GMC*, 865. A letter of Arethas confirms the influence of the eunuch, but points also to that of Leo's secretary Stephen: *ASM*, II, 94-104, esp. 94. 1—95. 2, 104. 13-19; Jenkins and Laourdas, 'Eight Letters', 363-366.

<sup>152</sup> For this see *VE*, 79. 7—83. 4.

inclined to concede his wish and that Nikolaos said he would too if all were unanimous, but as soon as the patriarch got the metropolitans on their own he made them reaffirm in writing their opposition to the emperor.

According to the *Life of Euthymios* Leo then made one last effort on 1 February 907 (the feast of Tryphon), summoning again the metropolitans and the patriarch, and giving Nikolaos an ultimatum.<sup>153</sup> Leo asserted that the representatives from the other sees were now on their way with writs granting economy<sup>154</sup>, so given this would Nikolaos receive him tomorrow in the church of the Theotokos at Blachernai for the feast of Hypapante. With the refusal of Nikolaos and the subsequent assent of most of the metropolitans to the patriarch's decision Leo was left with no choice. He could not have the synod being sabotaged by the opposition of the patriarch of Constantinople, so he exiled Nikolaos and the metropolitans. Nikolaos was dispatched to his monastery at Galakrenai<sup>155</sup>, whilst the metropolitans were sent on ships from the Phiale to 'outside the town'. Four days later the emperor began his campaign to undermine Nikolaos by alleging that he had been in league with the plotter and deserter Andronikos Doukas, an allegation that the *Life of Euthymios* presents as the truth.<sup>156</sup> Letters of Nikolaos were produced which fugitives from Doukas swore on the cross were indeed sent by the patriarch to Andronikos. Having disgraced the patriarch Leo then extracted a resignation from him by agreeing to drop the matter of his treachery. Leo had ruthlessly pursued his goal, ridding himself of his opponents, but he was not yet out of the woods; the synod was still to take place and he needed a new patriarch who would support him.

Regarding the new patriarch Leo struck lucky, despite initial fears. At last Euthymios was put forward as successor to the patriarch, perhaps by virtue of being *synkellos*, though his *Life* reports that it was because he was nominated by the metropolitans as the best choice since he was "above reproach, and marked with the seal of sanctity,

<sup>153</sup> *VE*, 83. 22—89. 2.

<sup>154</sup> So runs the version of the *VE*, but Nikolaos asserts that the representatives from Rome arrived before he was exiled, and that it was alleged that he refused to meet or talk with them: *Nicholas. Letters*, 222. 129—224. 158. Thus the eastern representatives may indeed have arrived after Nikolaos's fall but it seems that those from the west came to Constantinople before this, and it is easy to understand why Leo did not want to risk letting them meet with Nikolaos.

<sup>155</sup> See also *GMC*, 865; *Nicholas. Letters*, 224. 167-172. Concerning Nikolaos's monastery see I. Ševčenko, 'An Early Tenth-Century Inscription from Galakrenai with Echoes from Nonnos and the *Palatine Anthology*', *DOP*, 41 (1987), 461-468.

<sup>156</sup> *VE*, 91. 17-29. For the question of Andronikos's plot and Nikolaos's role in it see Chapter Eight below.

and conspicuous for his great achievements”<sup>157</sup>. It does seem likely that the metropolitans had influence in nominating him for, as the *Life* itself admits, Leo was wary of the choice of Euthymios since he had so often opposed his will in the past; the emperor had indeed studiously avoided giving him the post the last two times it had become vacant even though Euthymios had been *synkellos* on both occasions. The monk’s eventual reply to the proposal proved to be a blessing; he said he would only agree to be patriarch if the synod would consent to the granting of a dispensation.<sup>158</sup> This condition seems to have been well assured, so things were working out in Leo’s favour. Now he did not have to worry about the role of the patriarch of Constantinople at the synod since there was not going to be one. Matters thus transpired as Leo had wished and planned. The representatives from Rome, Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem presented their writs granting economy. Apparently most of the metropolitans in Byzantium recognised this economy<sup>159</sup>, agreeing that the emperor should be admitted into church again, but also that he had to fulfill the terms of his penance, which Leo had already stated that he was content to observe. Euthymios had then to honour his promise and became patriarch.

As to the terms of Leo’s penance all that seems to be known is that the emperor was no longer allowed into the sanctuary, but had to stand at the altar railings as a penitent.<sup>160</sup> St Basil’s 80th canon expects that those who progressed to polygamy, that is beyond a third marriage, were to suffer a canonical penalty of eight years.<sup>161</sup> Whether this was imposed on Leo is unclear. Under normal circumstances such a marriage should also have been dissolved, as Leo’s opponents had called for. However since Leo had secured economy the fourth marriage was not annulled; Zoe remained in the palace as the emperor’s wife and Constantine’s mother.<sup>162</sup> An intriguing possibility though is that Leo never again slept with Zoe, either as part of his penance or as a personal decision; it is curious that there appear

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<sup>157</sup> *VE*, 95. 4-5.

<sup>158</sup> *VE*, 99. 31-36.

<sup>159</sup> It is clear that those who did not were exiled, if they were not already in exile; Arethas found himself exiled in Thrace: see *VE*, 103. 22-24.

<sup>160</sup> *VE*, 109. 21-23.

<sup>161</sup> Jenkins, *Imperial Centuries*, 217.

<sup>162</sup> However she was not recognised by the church as *augusta* within Leo’s lifetime, though the senatorial body did acclaim her as such: *VE*, 109. 24—113. 27. Ironically it was Nikolaos who both restored the presbyter who had married her to Leo and who recognised her as *augusta* in church, measures which Euthymios had refused to undertake: see *VE*, 125. 1-4, 137. 8-16.

to have been no further children born of this marriage.<sup>163</sup> One concession that Leo certainly made was changing the law to ensure that no one ever again could marry for a fourth time.<sup>164</sup> This decree may have been another of Euthymios's conditions for becoming patriarch, as the chronicles indicate that he accepted the post to forestall Leo from introducing a law that allowed third and fourth marriages to occur.<sup>165</sup> Leo VI thus has the dubious distinction of being the first and last person in the history of Byzantium to have been allowed to marry for a fourth time.

The crowning of Leo's success was a literal reality; on Sunday 15 May 908<sup>166</sup>, on the feast of Pentecost, the patriarch Euthymios officiated at the coronation of Leo's son and heir Constantine VII.<sup>167</sup> At last Leo's goal was realised, but the cost needs to be reckoned. The emperor of Byzantium had brought scandal on himself, breaking canon and civil law, refusing to accept the fate that God had allotted him, and now he lived the life of a penitent. Yet in the end God had granted Leo a son, and by common consent the synod of 907 had agreed to supply economy to the emperor. Leo's reign was not fatally undermined, and Constantine VII's right to rule was never questioned. If the matter turned out a success it was only because of Leo's determination and the effective strategy of his plans. It is time that the lesson of the most famous feature of Leo's reign was fully appreciated, that such qualities as the emperor displayed in his efforts to secure a male heir of his own blood should not be restricted to this isolated strand of his reign.

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<sup>163</sup> Zoe's alleged affair with the eunuch Constantine may be a symptom of her frustration: *GMC*, 869.

<sup>164</sup> Oikonomidès, 'Interpolation'.

<sup>165</sup> *GMC*, 866.

<sup>166</sup> For the date see P. Grierson and R. J. H. Jenkins, 'The Date of Constantine VII's Coronation', *Byz*, 32 (1962), 133-138, repr. *Studies on*, XIII.

<sup>167</sup> *GMC*, 868-869.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### MILITARY MATTERS: THE BULGARIAN WAR, THE ARAB NAVAL THREAT AND THE *TAKTIKA*

In the sphere of foreign affairs Leo VI has received much harsh criticism from Byzantinists. Runciman characterised the emperor as an 'apathetic, indolent statesman' who 'would never go out of his way to intervene abroad', Ostrogorsky asserted that 'Unlike Basil I, Leo VI had no clear programme of foreign policy', and Vasiliev accused Leo of being 'indolent et inhabile' with regard to the military concerns of his reign.<sup>1</sup> Such verdicts are understandable given the catalogue of military failures that the chronicles record; this catalogue is long but worth repeating. The inhabitants of Hypsele, a fortress north of Sebasteia, were carried off by the Arabs<sup>2</sup>; in southern Italy Agion of Longobardia defeated the Byzantine forces that were sent out to bring him to heel<sup>3</sup>; Samos was besieged by the Arabs and its *strategos* was taken prisoner<sup>4</sup>; provoked by the obstinacy of the emperor, Symeon of Bulgaria was led to declare war on the Byzantines, defeating them in battle twice, and he also managed to avoid being compelled to make peace on Byzantine terms when the emperor recalled his forces<sup>5</sup>; the city of Demetrias in Greece was taken by the Arabs<sup>6</sup>; in Sicily the town of Taormina fell to the Arabs whilst the Byzantine fleet was occupied in Constantinople helping build churches for Leo<sup>7</sup>; Lemnos was seized by the Arabs and its inhabitants were taken prisoner<sup>8</sup>; an Arab fleet sailed towards Constantinople but diverted to Thessalonike and sacked it, whilst the Byzantine fleet kept their distance<sup>9</sup>; the Byzantine navy was worsted by the Arab fleet in an engagement of the last years of the reign.<sup>10</sup> Yet despite this record the

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<sup>1</sup> S. Runciman, *A History of the First Bulgarian Empire* (London, 1930), 126; Ostrogorsky, *State*, 255; Vasiliev, *Byzance et les Arabes*, II. 1, 219.

<sup>2</sup> *GMC*, 849-850.

<sup>3</sup> *GMC*, 852.

<sup>4</sup> *GMC*, 852.

<sup>5</sup> *GMC*, 853-855.

<sup>6</sup> *GMC*, 860.

<sup>7</sup> *GMC*, 860.

<sup>8</sup> *GMC*, 861.

<sup>9</sup> *GMC*, 862-863.

<sup>10</sup> *GMC*, 870.

emperor has found his apologists. Jenkins commented that 'It is customary to represent the foreign and military policy of Leo the Wise as uniformly unsuccessful and even disastrous, and true it is that his reign was marked by some terrible reverses, against both the Bulgarians and the Saracens. But the results of these were...temporary; whereas the results of the Byzantine counter-measures, in organisation and diplomacy, were both permanent and salutary'.<sup>11</sup> Karlin-Hayter, the emperor's major advocate, showed in a study devoted to the topic of foreign affairs during Leo's reign that the accepted impression of the emperor in this field was in need of considerable adjustment.<sup>12</sup> She stressed that the overwhelmingly gloomy picture of failure that the biased chronicles are so keen to present has to be tempered by evidence from other sources that reveal more positive aspects of the emperor and his deeds. It emerges that Leo can be seen as 'his own Minister for War'<sup>13</sup>; that he oversaw a considerable step forward' in the organisation of the themes<sup>14</sup>; that he was not disinterested in military matters<sup>15</sup>; that Agion's victory was short-lived<sup>16</sup>; that the loss of Taormina was more a symbolic blow than a real one since Sicily was in truth already lost<sup>17</sup>; that peace was secured with the Bulgarians from 896 until the end of Leo's reign, leaving the emperor free to concentrate on the east, using the tools of war and diplomacy.<sup>18</sup> From observations such as these it transpires that the reign is not the military disaster-area that it is so often portrayed as; Karlin-Hayter concludes that 'The overall balance is that some territory was added to the Empire, a number of small states were induced to enter more closely the Byzantine sphere of influence, conquests of the preceding reign were consolidated and the frontiers strengthened'.<sup>19</sup> Leo

<sup>11</sup> Jenkins, *Imperial Centuries*, 201.

<sup>12</sup> Karlin-Hayter, 'Military Affairs'.

<sup>13</sup> Karlin-Hayter, 'Military Affairs', 17.

<sup>14</sup> Karlin-Hayter, 'Military Affairs', 19-20, n. 5. For Leo's work on the themes on the eastern frontier see N. Oikonomidès, 'L'organisation de la frontière orientale de Byzance aux Xe-XIe siècles et le taktikon de l'Escorial', *Actes du XIVe Congrès International des Etudes Byzantines*, I (Bucarest, 1974), 285-302, repr. *Documents et études*, XXIV.

<sup>15</sup> Karlin-Hayter, 'Military Affairs', 20.

<sup>16</sup> Karlin-Hayter, 'Military Affairs', 22-23. See also the comments of Kreutz, *Before the Normans*, 65. On southern Italy during Leo's reign see Gay, *Italie méridionale*, I; Vasiliev, *Byzance et les Arabes*, II, 1, 152-157; Kreutz, *Before the Normans*, esp. 65-66.

<sup>17</sup> Karlin-Hayter, 'Military Affairs', 24.

<sup>18</sup> Karlin-Hayter, 'Military Affairs', 29.

<sup>19</sup> Karlin-Hayter, 'Military Affairs', 16. See also the comments of Whittow, *Making*, esp. 314-315, who asserts that 'The real achievements of the years between 871 and Leo VI's death in 912 are not to be found in the occasional long-distance raid to sack an Arab city...but in the steady transformation of the frontier zone so that by 912 the Arabs had been pinned back behind the Taurus and Anti-Taurus, while at

VI is attributed with only 'three major blunders', the 'failure to defend Thessalonica, the provocation that sparked off the Bulgarian war and the premature withdrawal of Byzantine forces from Bulgaria'.<sup>20</sup> However Karlin-Hayter's vital reassessment was ignored by Browning, who eight years later is found still peddling the old image; he asserts that Leo 'had no taste for military matters, and worse still no foreign policy'.<sup>21</sup> Given the continuation of such a presentation of Leo and his reign it is necessary to return to the issue of military matters. Due to the existence of Karlin-Hayter's analysis of the emperor's record in foreign affairs it would however be redundant to tread the comprehensive path that she has already taken; a different approach is required. Fewer phenomena will be examined in greater detail. Initially Leo's attitude to military matters must be gauged, for if this crucial factor is misapprehended the perception of the events of his reign is adversely affected. Then the cases of the two major military threats that faced his empire, Bulgaria and the Arab navy, will be considered; this allows for Leo's attitude to be assessed with regard to the most important military problems of his day, and has the added benefit of concentrating attention on the emperor's 'three major blunders'. This approach will illustrate that Leo was concerned with the physical condition of his empire, that he was unlucky in facing exceptional problems simultaneously, and that it is certainly a gross misrepresentation to assert that he had no taste for military matters and no foreign policy.

In the history of ninth-century Byzantium Leo VI is an exceptional emperor, for he was one that never went on campaign.<sup>22</sup> Indeed the furthest he seems to have travelled beyond Constantinople was to Nikomedeia, Olympos and Pythia.<sup>23</sup> This fact that Leo was not a soldier seems to have contributed to the popular perception that he was indifferent to military matters; it has even given rise to the rather anachronistic suggestion that he was a pacifist.<sup>24</sup> Such deductions are

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the same time the Armenian clans who dominated the mountains had been turned from clients of the Arabs into clients of the emperor'.

<sup>20</sup> Karlin-Hayter, 'Military Affairs', 39.

<sup>21</sup> Browning, *Bulgaria*, 57.

<sup>22</sup> See Tougher, 'Non-Campaigning', which this Chapter incorporates material from.

<sup>23</sup> *DAI*, I, 246. 36—248. 38. For Leo on Olympos see also *TC*, 464. Leo went to Olympos for the monks, and to Pythia probably for the hot springs (a letter of Theodore of Cyzicus to Constantine VII indicates that Leo improved the bathing facilities at Pythia: see J. Darrouzès, *Epistoliers byzantins du Xe siècle* (Paris, 1960), 326. 17-20). As for Nikomedeia, perhaps the emperor went here to address the army.

<sup>24</sup> Vasiliev, *Byzance et les Arabes*, II. 1, 127, 219; Vogt, 'Jeunesse', 411; Grégoire, 'Blaise', 395.

illogical, for it is entirely possible that an emperor can be interested in military matters even if he is not a soldier himself. The case of Justinian I (527-565) who launched the campaign in the sixth century to retake the west demonstrates the truth of this. Yet it is certainly intriguing that Leo was not a soldier, for emperors had been taking the field with their armies ever since Heraclius had put a definitive end in the seventh century to the apparent trend of the non-campaigning emperor. The obvious explanation for this phenomenon was that Leo had never received the necessary training. Vogt's opinion that Leo must have received a military training, probably from the sponsors of his tonsure, is undermined by his own admission that nothing is known of this aspect of Leo's education<sup>25</sup>, as well as by the words of the emperor himself. In his *Taktika* Leo states that he only knew of war against the Arabs second-hand, learning from his generals, from accounts written for previous emperors and from listening to his father.<sup>26</sup> This lack of practical instruction is explicable due to the fact that Basil had expected his eldest son to succeed him and had only attended to his military education, taking him on campaign to the east shortly before his death in 879.<sup>27</sup> When Constantine died in 879 and Leo became heir-apparent the dynastic concerns of marriage and grandchildren were more pressing. Leo's imprisonment in 883 also precluded military experience. Although this seems the obvious answer to Leo's non-campaigning lifestyle once emperor it is actually insufficient explanation. On his elevation to the position of caesar and his posting to Gaul in 355 the book-loving Julian embraced an active military role with great success, despite having had no military training. Closer to Leo's own day is the example of Theophilos (829-842), who does not seem to have had any military experience prior to his reign. A factor that was thought to have a bearing on the matter was Leo's health. Some Byzantinists have asserted that Leo was simply too ill to campaign<sup>28</sup>, but this is not substantiated by the sources.<sup>29</sup> It is clear then that Leo chose not to campaign on personal grounds, but this does not mean that he lacked interest or found war distasteful<sup>30</sup>, rather he seems to have been motivated by his perception of his role as emperor. Leo cast himself as a centralised authoritative figure, established at the hub of the imperial city and dispensing his wisdom

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<sup>25</sup> Vogt, 'Jeunesse', 407-408.

<sup>26</sup> *PG* 107, 976, 18. 123.

<sup>27</sup> *VB*, 278.

<sup>28</sup> See Grosdidier de Matons, 'Trois études', 229; Diehl, *Portraits*, 173.

<sup>29</sup> For details see Tougher, 'Non-Campaigning'.

<sup>30</sup> Dain and Foucault, 'Les stratégistes', 354, assert that Leo had 'peu d'inclination pour la vie des camps et des opérations'.

from there.<sup>31</sup> He was content to let his generals fight his battles, but he made sure that they had the benefit of his knowledge in the form of the *Taktika*.

The very existence of the *Taktika* renders the allegation that Leo had no interest in military matters incomprehensible. The *Taktika* was a manual on warfare addressed to an unspecified general, indicating that the text was for all the emperor's generals to hear or read. This work provides a means of gauging Leo's concern for the military condition of his empire. Indeed it does not mark the emperor's first foray into the world of military literature; previously he had produced the *Problemata*, a work of his youth consisting of a series of extracts from the sixth-century *Strategikon* of Maurice.<sup>32</sup> In the *Problemata* Leo quotes from Maurice's text to answer questions that he has posed. That Leo produced another work on the subject of warfare can be deduced from the *Taktika* itself; the emperor indicates that he compiled a book of excerpts relating to the topic, calling to mind the compilations that Constantine VII is famed for creating.<sup>33</sup> It should not be forgotten that Leo also instructed the *magistros* Leo Katakalon (when he was a monk at Sigriane) to compose a work on imperial military expeditions.<sup>34</sup> Such production and commissioning of works on warfare tends to suggest a genuine interest in things military.

It is important to consider the origin and nature of the *Taktika*. Vogt was of the opinion that it originated in Leo's student days, that he was instructed to compose it by his masters, and that he continued to update it until his death.<sup>35</sup> The general opinion of Byzantinists however is that it dates to the early 900s<sup>36</sup>; certainly the latest events it refers to are the Bulgarian war of 894-896 and the subsequent peace between Byzantium and Bulgaria. Vogt's notion of the evolution of the text does have a certain validity though, as can be deduced from the existence of two distinct recensions of the work, called the Laurentian (dated to the mid-tenth century) and the Ambrosian (dated to the first half of the eleventh century).<sup>37</sup> The *Taktika* is better known in the later Ambrosian form, which is reproduced in the

<sup>31</sup> See Tougher, 'Non-Campaigning'.

<sup>32</sup> A. Dain, *Leonis VI sapientis problemata* (Paris, 1935). See also Dain and Foucault, 'Les stratégistes', 354.

<sup>33</sup> See Magdalino, 'Non-Juridical'.

<sup>34</sup> See Haldon, *Three Treatises*, 94-97.

<sup>35</sup> Vogt, 'Jeunesse', 408.

<sup>36</sup> See Grosdidier de Matons, 'Trois études', 193-194.

<sup>37</sup> For these two versions see Dain and Foucault, 'Les stratégistes', 355-356; A. Dain, 'Inventaire raisonné des cents manuscrits des «constitutions tactiques» de Leon VI le sage', *Scripta*, 1 (1946-47), 33-49, esp. 34, 40.

*Patrologia Graeca*. As has been recognised Leo conceived his *Taktika* as a legislative work, a fact that is reflected in the language used throughout the text.<sup>38</sup> Each chapter is termed a *diataxis*, which can be translated as 'constitution'. In the Ambrosian edition the constitutions, preceded by a prooimion and followed by an epilogue, are arranged as follows:

1. About tactics and the general.
2. About what kind of man the general must be.
3. About the necessity of taking decisions.
4. About the division of the army and the appointment of leaders.
5. About weapons.
6. About the armour of the cavalry and the infantry.
7. About the exercise of the cavalry and the infantry.
8. About military punishments.
9. About marching.
10. About the baggage of the army.
11. About encampments.
12. About preparation for war.
13. About the day before battle.
14. About the day of battle.
15. About besieging cities.
16. About matters after the battle.
17. About unexpected incursions.
18. About the methods of arranging the armies of the Romans and the differing nations.
19. About naval warfare.
20. About different maxims.

As stated above this arrangement of the constitutions was not the earliest known; that is found in the Laurentian edition where constitutions 15, 17 and 19 (as they are known in the Ambrosian text) follow the epilogue. Thus it appears that Leo wrote these three constitutions after he had composed the others, to which he appended them. At a later date they were integrated into the main body of the text, so forming the Ambrosian recension.

So much for the structure of the work; its worth as a military handbook for generals at the start of the tenth century is a more controversial subject. Given that Leo had no first hand experience of military action and that much of the *Taktika* is based on the work of previous authors, especially the *Strategikon* of Maurice, doubts about its value are to be expected. Vogt describes Leo's work as a study of the army as it existed in the past and as it ought to be at the end of the ninth century, but not as it was in reality; any contemporary

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<sup>38</sup> See Magdalino, 'Non-Judicial'; Grosdidier de Matons, 'Trois études', 229.

allusions in the work are to be ascribed to the fact that Leo did continue to add to the text.<sup>39</sup> Dagron, who characterises Leo as a poor general and a mediocre strategist, suggests that the advice and analysis that the emperor offers is not so much mistaken as naive, and he also criticises him for underestimating the danger that the Christianised Bulgarians presented.<sup>40</sup> Haldon detected that there was an air of uncertainty about what Leo was writing, that the emperor 'tended to confuse facts with ideals', yet he ascribes this not to ineptitude on the emperor's part but to the fact that he was writing at 'the beginning of a period when new policies were being shaped and when the armies of the Empire were undergoing reform and reorganization'.<sup>41</sup> More overtly positive comments have been made by other Byzantinists. In the sphere of literature it has been appreciated that Leo revived the genre of the military handbook, for a whole spate of such works followed on the heels of his production.<sup>42</sup> Further, although Leo used the works of earlier authors as the basis for his book it does not follow that it has no original or relevant content. Concerning the introduction to the work Magdalino noted that despite Leo basing himself on Maurice 'the differences between the prooimia are as striking and significant as their common core'.<sup>43</sup> Evidence of the contemporary nature of the work is clear from the fact that it contains the first analysis by a Byzantine author in a *Taktika* of the main enemies of the empire since the seventh century, the Arabs.<sup>44</sup> Indeed Leo indicates that he was moved to write the *Taktika* because of the threat that was presented to the Byzantine empire by the Arabs<sup>45</sup>; the work was intended to address contemporary concerns, not to be a purely academic exercise.<sup>46</sup> Dagron has even suggested that the emperor was keen for the Byzantine army to copy

<sup>39</sup> Vogt, 'Jeunesse', 408.

<sup>40</sup> G. Dagron and H. Mihăescu, *Le traité sur la guérilla de l'empereur Nicéphore Phocas* 963-969 (Paris, 1986), 9, 145, 152.

<sup>41</sup> J. F. Haldon, 'Some Aspects of Byzantine Military Technology from the Sixth to the Tenth Centuries', *BMGS*, 1 (1975), 11-47, esp. 45.

<sup>42</sup> Dain and Foucault, 'Les stratégistes', 354.

<sup>43</sup> Magdalino, 'Non-Juridical'. Further Dain and Foucault, 'Les stratégistes', 356, point out that Leo's information is not always traceable to a source.

<sup>44</sup> *PG* 107, 972-989, 18. 109-154. See G. Dagron, 'Byzance et le modèle islamique au Xe siècle. A propos des *constitutions tactiques* de l'empereur Léon VI', *Comptes Rendus de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres*, (1983), 219-243; T. G. Kolias, 'The *Taktika* of Leo VI the Wise and the Arabs', *Graeco-Arabica*, 3 (1984), 129-135.

<sup>45</sup> *PG* 107, 981, 18. 142, 1093, Epilogue, chap. 71. See the comments of Kolias, 'Leo VI the Wise and the Arabs', esp. 130.

<sup>46</sup> Kolias, 'Leo VI the Wise and the Arabs', esp. 129, stresses the practicality of tenth-century Byzantine military manuals.

certain traits of the Arab system in order to achieve the success that the enemy so evidently did; these traits were the concept of holy war, the fact that war was an integral part of Arab social life by virtue of territorial organisation, the fact that the army consisted of volunteers, and that it was amply supplied and funded by those Arabs who did not participate in the fighting.<sup>47</sup> Such was the value of the emperor's examination of the Arab army and the threat it presented to Byzantium that part of this section of the work had an autonomous manuscript tradition.<sup>48</sup> That Leo was concerned with the efficacy of Byzantine forces is undeniable, and he pin-points various areas for improvement. A particular worry was the insufficiency of bowmen in the army. He reflects several times on this issue, asserting that harm had been suffered because of the lack of this weapon which was so vital when fighting the Saracens and the Turk, and he prescribes that each man under the general should have his own bow.<sup>49</sup> The emperor also identifies three further problems with the army: the lack of practice of manoeuvres, simple carelessness and the shortage of soldiers.<sup>50</sup>

The impression that Leo was concerned with contemporary issues is further confirmed by other elements of the work, perhaps most obviously the constitution on naval warfare, the *Naumachika*.<sup>51</sup> Leo asserts that he could find no written sources to serve as a basis for this *diataxis* and so he had to resort to gathering information from his own naval officers.<sup>52</sup> It is unlikely that an emperor who was apathetic about military affairs would bother to go to such trouble. Further the determination to address the very topic of naval warfare shows that Leo had identified one of the key areas affecting the security of the empire in the ninth and tenth centuries, for then the Arab navy was at the peak of its power. The chapter on the navy was one of three that the emperor wrote posterior to the main bulk of the *Taktika*, the other two being on unexpected incursions and siege warfare. These after-thought constitutions suggest that Leo realised that these topics

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<sup>47</sup> Dagron, 'Modèle islamique', 221. See also Koliass, 'Leo VI the Wise and the Arabs', esp. 131, 134.

<sup>48</sup> Dagron, 'Modèle islamique', 220, n. 9.

<sup>49</sup> *PG* 107, 805, 11. 49, 952, 18. 22-23, 1036, 20. 81. Haldon, 'Military Technology', 39, picked up on Leo's identification of archery as a cause for concern, and notes that it was only in the later tenth century that an advance in this area was made.

<sup>50</sup> *PG* 107, 989, 18. 153. The manpower problem is also commented upon at 977, 18. 129 and 1069, 20. 205.

<sup>51</sup> The Ambrosian version of this constitution has been edited by A. Dain, *Naumachika* (Paris, 1943), 15-33.

<sup>52</sup> *PG* 107, 989, 19. 1.

were of particular relevance to military affairs within his own reign, which was marked by sudden assaults on Byzantine territory by the Bulgars and assaults on coastal town and fortresses by Arab naval forces. Karlin-Hayter's view of the *Taktika* as 'a highly practical composition' has justification.<sup>53</sup> Further the work is a vital indication that Leo VI was not indifferent to military affairs but deeply concerned about the physical assaults the empire found itself subjected to during his reign.

Having detected Leo's theoretical concern for the condition of the empire physical realities now have to be considered. Leo's reaction to the two main military problems of his day, the newly aggressive Bulgarian kingdom and the predatory Arab naval forces whose shadow loomed especially large over the Aegean sea, shall be examined and assessed. A point worth noting initially is the seriousness of this double threat; in assessments of Leo's military record this has surely not been appreciated sufficiently. To a large extent then Leo was unlucky in his opponents, and it must be questioned whether it is fair to hold him responsible for the failures against them.

When Leo acceded to power in 886 the Byzantine empire was at peace with the Bulgarian kingdom which was ruled by its khan Boris, and indeed had been at peace ever since the Bulgarians had converted to orthodoxy in 864/5<sup>54</sup>; the emperor Michael III had used the threat of military action to enforce this conversion, and when Boris was baptised he took the name of the Byzantine emperor as his own.<sup>55</sup> It seemed that the days of the Bulgarian assaults on Byzantium which had ceased with the sudden death of the infamous khan Krum in 814 were a thing of the past.<sup>56</sup> Nothing is known of Leo's relations with Bulgaria during the first seven years of his reign, though it is clear that it was a time of crisis and change in the neighbouring kingdom. Boris resigned from power in 889, handing the throne on to his eldest son Vladimir.<sup>57</sup> However this son was set on reversing the policies of his father, and in 893 Boris had to come out of the monastery to which he had retired and restore order to the kingdom. Vladimir was removed from power and in his place Boris installed another son, Symeon, who had also been living as a monk. What Leo made of these events can only be conjectured, but it seems probable

<sup>53</sup> Karlin-Hayter, 'Military Affairs', 21.

<sup>54</sup> For the conversion see Mayr-Harting, 'Two Conversions'; Hannick, 'Nouvelles Chrétientés', esp. 921-937; Whittow, *Making*, 280-282.

<sup>55</sup> Browning, *Bulgaria*, 55.

<sup>56</sup> Browning, *Bulgaria*, 50.

<sup>57</sup> Browning, *Bulgaria*, 56.

that he would have been pleased for Vladimir had threatened the entente between Byzantium and Bulgaria that Boris and the emperors Michael III and Basil I had achieved. Indeed Byzantium may have been particularly satisfied with the rise to power of Symeon since he had already come closer within the orbit of its influence than any previous Bulgarian ruler, having received some education at Constantinople as a youth; he was apparently known as the half-Greek.<sup>58</sup> But if the Byzantines had expected that having a Bulgarian ruler with such a history would be beneficial and ensure good relations between the two states they were mistaken; within a year of Symeon's accession Byzantium and Bulgaria were at war.

Drawing on the chronicle account of the outbreak of this war Karlin-Hayter reckoned it to be one of Leo's three major military blunders. This account revolves around the story of the transfer of the Bulgarian market to Thessalonike from Constantinople. The chronicles allege that it was Stylianos who had brought about this change as a favour for business friends of a beloved servant, and these business men administered the market to their own advantage at the expense of the Bulgarian merchants. Leo then refused to listen to the complaints of the delegation that Symeon sent to Constantinople.<sup>59</sup> The emperor was thus implicated in a deed of blind favouritism that was to have dire consequences for the empire. Magdalino has supplied an interpretation for this tale that presents the decision in a more worthy light, but the end result is the same; Leo's obstinacy resulted in the provoking of a significant enemy. On the surface then Leo does seem to have made a blunder, but other factors need to be taken into account. For instance, did Leo have any reason to believe that dismissing the Bulgarian complaint would meet with such a drastic response from Symeon? The emperor may have been trusting to the existing peace treaty between the two powers.<sup>60</sup> One vital factor is Symeon himself; was he in fact determined to start a war?<sup>61</sup> The chronicles certainly assert that the complaints about the market were simply an excuse for war.<sup>62</sup> Recent interpretations of Symeon as the

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<sup>58</sup> Browning, *Bulgaria*, 57.

<sup>59</sup> Concerning this issue of the transfer of the Bulgarian market to Thessalonike see also N. Oikonomidès, 'Le kommerkion d'Abydos, Thessalonique et le commerce Bulgare au IXe siècle', *Hommes et richesses dans l'empire byzantin*, II, VIIIe-XVe siècle, edd. V. Kravari, J. Lefort and C. Morrisson (Paris, 1991), 241-248, esp. 246-247.

<sup>60</sup> *PG* 107, 956, 18. 42.

<sup>61</sup> Browning, *Bulgaria*, 57. That Symeon wanted a war is also considered a possibility by Whittow, *Making*, 286, who states that the war of 894 was 'probably undertaken more with a view to establishing the military credentials of the new regime'.

<sup>62</sup> *GMC*, 853; *TC*, 357.

injured party and Byzantium as the provoker<sup>63</sup> would dismiss this allegation as Byzantium shifting blame for the war off her shoulders, but the fact that war broke out so soon after Symeon became khan does suggest a desire to take the field against Byzantium. If Magdalino is right to see in the transfer of the market to Thessalonike a measure of the emperor to reward St Demetrios and his city then this act must surely date to the beginning of Leo's reign, which strengthens the impression that Symeon is using it as an excuse for war; it only becomes an issue on his accession. It is thus questionable if Leo can be blamed for a war that Symeon himself was set on.

As to why Symeon was intent on conflict with Byzantium, the extreme view suggesting that Symeon aimed at the overthrow of the empire from 893 has rightly been questioned, allowing for the development and progression of Symeon's ambitions.<sup>64</sup> Shepard supplies a more modest and convincing reason, which in fact tells against his desire to see Symeon as entirely innocent; he suggests that Symeon 'may well have felt that he needed to demonstrate to his subjects that he was no "Byzantine candidate" but politically independent and ready to challenge Byzantium by force when it infringed upon his people's interests or his own status'.<sup>65</sup> The theory that Symeon was moved by desire to assert the independence of his country<sup>66</sup> carries conviction too for it finds expression in his cultural policy also<sup>67</sup>; ironically it was the Byzantines themselves who had armed him with this weapon of culture. With the demise of the Byzantine missionary Methodios in 885 and the ending of his work in Moravia (spreading orthodoxy by translating Christian works into the Slav language) his disciples, such as Clement, Naum and Constantine, found themselves

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<sup>63</sup> J. Shepard, 'Symeon of Bulgaria—Peacemaker', *Annuaire de l'université de Sofia "St Kliment Ohridski"*, 83 (1989) (published 1994), 9-48, esp. 16, argues that Symeon 'seems essentially to have been reacting to Byzantium's high-handedness in arbitrarily switching the trading staple from Constantinople to Thessalonica and in ignoring his protests'; J. Fine, *The Early Medieval Balkans* (Ann Arbor, 1983), 137; I. Božilov, 'A propos des rapports Bulgaro-Byzantins sous le Tzar Symeon (893-912)', *Byzantinobulgarica*, 6 (1980), 73-81, esp. 81, states that Symeon simply sought 'la liquidation d'une injustice', taking the chronicle account at face value.

<sup>64</sup> See Shepard, 'Peacemaker'; Božilov, 'Rapports'; Fine, *Early Medieval Balkans*, esp. 137.

<sup>65</sup> Shepard, 'Peacemaker', 16.

<sup>66</sup> Browning, *Bulgaria*, 57-58. For a reading of Symeon's ambitions see also I. Božilov, 'L'idéologie politique du Tzar Symeon: Pax Symeonica', *Byzantinobulgarica*, 8 (1986), 73-88, which concentrates in particular on the controversial events of 913. Shepard, 'Peacemaker', sees 917 as the crucial turning point in Symeon's aims.

<sup>67</sup> Božilov, 'Rapports', 81, particularly emphasises Symeon's concern for internal cultural matters in the years 893-912.

without a base of operations, and ended up as refugees in Bulgaria where Boris put their talents to good use.<sup>68</sup> Located at Ohrid and Pliska they were entrusted with the creation of a Slavic clergy and a national liturgy, and thus the displacement of Byzantine clergy and the Greek language, which had been the official tongue of church and court. Symeon continued this policy of his father, taking it to further heights. He was at the centre of a literary circle at Preslav (which in 893 had replaced Pliska as the Bulgarian royal city), where he was involved in the translation of Byzantine texts into Slavic; he himself translated extracts from the homilies of John Chrysostom, and ordered others to produce similar works. A collection of sayings and writings of Greek and Latin fathers was produced, as well as a short chronicle, written by Constantine in 893-894. In 906 Constantine, now bishop of Preslav, made a translation of the sermons of Athanasius of Alexandria, which was copied in 907 by Tudor Doksov, a cousin of Symeon and a member of the circle.<sup>69</sup> A priest Gregory made a translation of the sixth-century Byzantine chronicle of Malalas, and also a version of the Trojan war. Symeon's literary tastes were renowned; the author of an anonymous panegyric likens the Bulgarian khan to a new Ptolemy as he amassed books in the palace, whilst the letters of the patriarch Nikolaos to Symeon refer to his love of literature, especially books of history.<sup>70</sup> Thus not only could Symeon meet the Byzantine empire militarily but culturally also.

The war, started by Symeon, initially went badly for Byzantium; those forces that Leo sent out to meet the Bulgarian incursion were defeated in Macedonia and the commander, Prokopios Krenites, was killed.<sup>71</sup> To add to the humiliation Symeon seized the Khazars who formed Leo's *hetaireia*, cut off their noses and sent them back to Constantinople. To an extent this defeat amounted to no more than Byzantine loss of face. The force that had been dispatched against Symeon was one that had been drummed up at short notice, the

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<sup>68</sup> See F. Dvornik, *Byzantine Missions among the Slavs. SS. Constantine-Cyril and Methodius* (New York, 1970), esp. 244-254; *Kiril and Methodius. Founders of Slavonic Writing. A Collection of Sources and Critical Studies*, ed. I. Duichev, tr. S. Nikolov (New York, 1985); Whittow, *Making*, 284-285. For Clement see D. Obolensky, *Six Byzantine Portraits* (Oxford, 1988), 8-33.

<sup>69</sup> See E. Georguiev, 'Konstantin Preslavski', *Kiril and Methodius*, 161-180.

<sup>70</sup> I. Duichev, 'Panegyric to Tsar Simeon', *Kiril and Methodius*, 151-152; *Nicholas. Letters*, 184. 64-66, 210. 66-88. See also the comments of Shepard, 'Peacemaker', 13-14.

<sup>71</sup> *GMC*, 853. It is Skylitzes, *Scylitzae*, 176. 89, who provides Krenites's Christian name.

main force being already occupied on campaign.<sup>72</sup> It was the suddenness and unexpectedness of Symeon's attack in 894 that was the major factor in the Byzantine defeat. For the next round Leo was to be in a much better state of preparation. He resorted to one of the classic principles of Byzantine foreign policy: make other people fight your battles. The people chosen were the Magyars, a Turkic people living north of the Danube. Niketas Skleros was dispatched by Leo to secure their help; he sailed up the Danube to meet with them, bringing incentives in the form of gifts from Constantinople.<sup>73</sup> The Magyars agreed to wage war on Symeon, and Niketas took hostages (presumably as a guarantee of their promised co-operation) and returned to Byzantium. This aid acquired through diplomacy was only part of Leo's response to the war begun by Symeon; it was combined with a major military and naval campaign which was put into action in 895.<sup>74</sup> The land forces were commanded by the domestic of the schools Nikephoros Phokas, whilst the *drungarios* of the fleet Eustathios commanded the navy. The army marched out to Bulgaria, and the navy sailed up the Danube where it met with the Magyars and readied to transport them over the river into Bulgarian territory. Leo's aim however was not to start a war; indeed Byzantine foreign policy can be generally characterised as pacific in that it was built around how to avoid full scale conflict. Rather the emperor was hoping to intimidate Symeon into making peace by this show of force, and to this end he dispatched an ambassador, the quaestor Konstantinakis, to the Bulgarian leader to conclude a peace treaty. But once again Symeon proved himself a unique and unpredictable enemy. The Byzantine ambassador was imprisoned and Symeon marched out to confront Nikephoros's forces. Whether they engaged is a moot point, but even if they did Symeon was soon distracted for the Magyars made their move; ferried across the Danube by Eustathios they hacked their way through the wicker screens that the Bulgarians had placed along the river and over-ran Bulgaria, reaching as far as Preslav.<sup>75</sup> Symeon had to turn away from the Byzantine forces to deal with this threat from the rear, and with his life in danger he had to take refuge in the

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<sup>72</sup> *PG* 107, 956, 18. 42; Runciman, *Bulgarian Empire*, 145; Vasiliev, *Byzance et les Arabes*, II, 1, 126.

<sup>73</sup> *GMC*, 853-854.

<sup>74</sup> For the campaign of 895 see *GMC*, 854-855; *TC*, 358-359. Shepard, 'Peacemaker', 17, accuses the Byzantines of escalating the war in 895, but this is hardly fair. Byzantium was making a show of force in order to cow Symeon back into submission; it is unlikely that Leo VI visualised the Byzantine forces taking on the Bulgarians in battle.

<sup>75</sup> *DAI*, I, 51. 38-40; *PG* 107, 956, 18. 42.

fortress of Moundraga.<sup>76</sup> The victorious Magyars exchanged their Bulgarian prisoners of war with the Byzantines. Thus Symeon was soundly beaten and Leo had placed him in a situation where he would be forced to make peace on Byzantine terms. To this end another Byzantine ambassador was dispatched to Symeon at Moundraga; this ambassador was the most famous diplomat of the reign, Leo Choiosphaktes.

It was at this point that another of Leo's 'blunders' occurred; the Byzantine land and water forces withdrew, so taking the military pressure off Symeon who was then able to act in his more familiar manner. He had Choiosphaktes imprisoned without even speaking with him (Symeon's foul treatment of diplomats became infamous<sup>77</sup>) and took his revenge on the Magyars who had been so instrumental in aiding the Byzantines achieve the humiliation of their Bulgarian opponent. In this task he was aided by another tribe, the Pechenegs.<sup>78</sup> Without Byzantine support the Magyars were defeated.<sup>79</sup> Symeon then issued Byzantium with an ultimatum through its mediator Choiosphaktes, who was being kept at Moundraga; before agreeing to peace terms he required the return of all the Bulgarian prisoners who had been taken in the war. This condition was fulfilled; Choiosphaktes returned to Constantinople with the Bulgar Theodore<sup>80</sup> who received the prisoners and then took them home. Events thus underwent a dramatic reversal of fortune; one moment Leo has Symeon where he wants him and the next the tables are turned and the Byzantine advantage is lost. The key issue is the withdrawal of Nikephoros and Eustathios, for this gave Symeon the freedom to act again. Leo has been held responsible for this undoubted blunder. Theophanes Continuatus explicitly states that the two men were commanded to return home.<sup>81</sup> However the earlier Logothete version is not so clear cut; it indicates that Nikephoros and Eustathios agreed to return.<sup>82</sup> Some element of blame should perhaps fall on Nikephoros and Eustathios then. Nikephoros Phokas did fall

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<sup>76</sup> *DAI*, I, 176. 11. *GMC*, 855, calls it Moudagra.

<sup>77</sup> See *Nicholas. Letters*, 192. 32—194. 41. The patriarch refused to send envoys of the pope on to Symeon because of his 'practice of detaining diplomatic agents'.

<sup>78</sup> *DAI*, I, 176. 13-19.

<sup>79</sup> In the next few years they migrated further westward, eventually forming the kingdom of Hungary.

<sup>80</sup> This Theodore is identified as a relative of Symeon, and may thus be Tudor Doksov.

<sup>81</sup> *TC*, 359.

<sup>82</sup> See for instance *GMC*, 854. It is also asserted that it was Eustathios who approached Symeon about peace, not vice-versa.

into disgrace on his return to the city, an event that Theophanes Continuatus unconvincingly tried to attribute to the machinations of Stylianos Zaoutzes. This chronicler's concern for the reputation of Phokas may have made him keen to exonerate his hero from any role in the withdrawal from Bulgaria by insisting on the unequivocal command to return. However the possibility that Leo used Nikephoros as a scapegoat to take the blame for the failure of the campaign in 895 cannot be discounted. Whatever the cause of the withdrawal a vital point to consider is whether the conclusion of a peace treaty in 895 would have made any difference to the course of Byzantine/Bulgarian relations. Given his nature it can be questioned whether Symeon would have observed such a treaty. Byzantine forces could not remain permanently on the Bulgarian frontiers so Symeon could not be checked indefinitely. What was unfortunate about the withdrawal was that Symeon was able to retaliate immediately, and the advantage that Leo had acquired in the form of the prisoners of war had to be given up to secure a treaty. As to the terms of the peace that were agreed after the return of the prisoners nothing is known. Byzantium did ultimately pay Bulgaria subsidies, but 896 seems a much more likely date for the initiation of this policy than 895. Given that Symeon was so keen to get the Bulgarian prisoners back this could be an indication that the peace terms were not yet too obviously in favour of Bulgaria; it must have been worthwhile for Byzantium to fulfill Symeon's terms, for why else would the captives have been restored to their freedom? It should also be noted that in 895 few, if any, Byzantine casualties were sustained; it was the Magyar allies who had met with Symeon's revenge.<sup>83</sup>

The restart of the Bulgarian war in 896 seems to have been as uncritically studied as the Byzantine withdrawal in 895, and significantly enough both events are connected with the figure of Nikephoros Phokas. For most chroniclers the war was sparked off again by the death of Nikephoros, perhaps suggesting that the fear of Phokas's military skill had kept Symeon in check.<sup>84</sup> It has been assumed that the issue of the Bulgarian market had also not been resolved<sup>85</sup>, though the chroniclers forget all about this issue after their initial

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<sup>83</sup> As noted by Shepard, 'Peacemaker', 17.

<sup>84</sup> *GMC*, 855. However *TC*, 360, contradicts this for it alleges that Nikephoros's career continued after his deposition from the post of domestic of the schools, asserting that he became *strategos* of the Thrakesion theme and achieved victories against the Arabs and the other nations. This information is not to be trusted: see Chapter Eight below for a consideration of Nikephoros Phokas's career. It is notable that this chronicle gives no explanation for the restarting of the war with Symeon.

<sup>85</sup> See for instance Božilov, 'Rapports', 81.

story concerning the cause of the conflict; Symeon's reported objective was to get more prisoners<sup>86</sup>; presumably Byzantine ones. If his aim was to acquire Byzantine prisoners to use as a bargaining tool he certainly achieved this, for the Byzantines were soundly defeated at the battle of Bulgarophygon in Thrace, about 100 miles west of Constantinople. Unlike the battle of 894 the inferiority of the Byzantine forces was not an excuse; all the thematic and tagmatic forces of the east were sent against the Bulgars, under the command of the new domestic of the schools Leo Katakalon. The ceasing of hostilities with the Arabs in 895-896 and an exchange of prisoners was also presumably meant to have improved the chances of success against the Bulgars.<sup>87</sup> Yet the Byzantines were defeated and the chroniclers assert that 'all perished', though Leo Katakalon himself certainly survived as did a certain Melias.<sup>88</sup> The seriousness of the military failure seems beyond doubt; it is likely that at this time the Bulgarians overran Thrace and even approached the walls of Constantinople, for it is recorded that they damaged the narthex of the great church at Pege during Leo's reign.<sup>89</sup> It would be at this date then that the emperor resorted to using Arab prisoners to repulse the Bulgarians.<sup>90</sup> After they had fulfilled this function Leo had the Arabs rounded up, disarmed, and then dispersed. The repulse or departure of Symeon was not however the end of the matter; the Bulgarian leader now held captive a large number of Byzantine prisoners that the state was anxious to retrieve. Once again a Byzantine diplomat was sent out to negotiate with Symeon, and for this task Leo chose Choïrosphaktes who already had experience of the canny Bulgarian. Letters of

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<sup>86</sup> Shepard, 'Peacemaker', 17, accepts this motive. Skylitzes, *Scylitzae*, 178. 46-50, has a rather different version of events. He asserts that it was Leo who broke the peace since he did not want to fulfill the terms of the treaties agreed with Bulgaria. This is an unlikely account; Byzantine emperors were not wont to initiate conflict. Further when battle was joined it was in Byzantine territory, which suggests that it was Bulgaria who was the aggressor. Skylitzes seems to have been confused by the account of Theophanes Continuatus which evidently served as his source. Theophanes Continuatus provides no explanation for the war of 896; in his tale about the career of Nikephoros this chronicler lost a key element of the main narrative. Thus Skylitzes had to supply an explanation, and from the account of Theophanes Continuatus it does appear that Leo VI is the aggressor since he sends his forces out against Symeon.

<sup>87</sup> See Vasiliev, *Byzance et les Arabes*, II, 1, 126.

<sup>88</sup> For Katakalon see *DAI*, I, 206. 51-52. For Melias see *De Thematribus*, 35, and also H. Grégoire, 'Notes épigraphiques', *Byz*, 8 (1933), 49-88, esp. 79-88.

<sup>89</sup> *AASS*, Nov III, 884; Mango, *Sources and Documents*, 205.

<sup>90</sup> Vasiliev, *Byzance et les Arabes*, II, 1, 129-130; Karlin-Hayter, 'Military Affairs', 27. However Shepard, 'Peacemaker', 17 and 37 n. 66, doubts both that the Bulgars did reach Constantinople and that Arab prisoners were used against them, citing the lack of Byzantine comment.

Symeon and Choiosphaktes survive from this period of negotiation, which the diplomat was to term the first of his three embassies to the Bulgarians, perhaps because the embassy of 895 never really occurred.<sup>91</sup> Although Choiosphaktes was later to claim the credit for the success of this first embassy, namely the freeing of 25,000 Byzantine prisoners and the securing of a peace treaty<sup>92</sup>, it transpires that the real negotiating went on directly between Symeon and Leo VI; whilst Symeon and Choiosphaktes played literary tricks and games with each other it was the emperor who was informed that Symeon would return the captives.<sup>93</sup> The price of the return of the captives and the settlement of peace, which ostensibly lasted until Leo's demise, is not known exactly, but it is likely that the Byzantines had had to agree to the paying of a subsidy to Bulgaria, for it was Alexander's refusal to continue this payment after his brother's death that led to the restarting of the Byzantine/Bulgarian conflict.<sup>94</sup> It is known that in 904 Symeon the *asekretis* was apparently on his way to the Bulgars with a gift, a gift which may have formed part of a subsidy.<sup>95</sup> It is likely that after Bulgarophygon the question of the Bulgarian market was settled too.<sup>96</sup> Vasiliev hypothesises that Symeon was just as keen for peace as the Byzantines, for his country, although victorious, was exhausted by the war, and he also wanted to consolidate his achievements.<sup>97</sup> Thus ostensibly from 896 until the end of Leo's reign the Bulgarians and the Byzantines were at peace, as is reflected in Philotheos's *Kletorologion*, where much is made of the presence of Bulgarian friends at the Byzantine court.<sup>98</sup>

<sup>91</sup> For the letters see Kolias, *Choerosphactès*, 76-91.

<sup>92</sup> Kolias, *Choerosphactès*, 113. 6-8.

<sup>93</sup> Kolias, *Choerosphactès*, letter 13, 89. 4-5.

<sup>94</sup> *GMC*, 873. Vasiliev, *Byzance et les Arabes*, II. 1, 127, believes that the treaty was settled in 897 and that it involved the Byzantines paying annual tribute. However he erroneously states that in return Symeon had to give up 30 fortresses in Dyrrachion; this concession was not won by Choiosphaktes on his first embassy but on his second. See also Božilov, 'Rapports', for discussion of the chronological problems of the relations between Byzantium and Bulgaria from 893-912. He asserts that there were four 'collisions' between 893 and 904, each terminated by a peace treaty. His belief that there was a conflict in the period 896-899 seems ungrounded, and the incidents of 901-902 and 904 do not necessarily mean that the peace established following Bulgarophygon was technically broken: see also the comments of Shepard, 'Peacemaker', 18.

<sup>95</sup> *VE*, 101. 17-19.

<sup>96</sup> Shepard, 'Peacemaker', 18, 19.

<sup>97</sup> Vasiliev, *Byzance et les Arabes*, II. 1, 132. Božilov, 'Rapports', 81, stresses that Symeon's concern up to 912 was for internal affairs.

<sup>98</sup> Oikonomidès, *Listes*, 163. 18, 167. 11-12, 169. 8-9, 177. 26, 181. 14-15, 203. 10, 207. 33-209. 1, 211. 10-11. See also the comments of Božilov, 'Rapports', 77-79; Shepard, 'Peacemaker', 18-19.

But Symeon was evidently still a problem for the empire, for Choirospaktes found himself having to undertake two more missions to the Bulgarian court.<sup>99</sup> The first of these further missions probably occurred in 901-902 and involved requesting that the Bulgarians give up possession of thirty fortresses in Dyrrachion which had been taken over with their goods and inhabitants.<sup>100</sup> The second embassy took place in 904, and entailed Choirospaktes persuading the Bulgarians not to take advantage of the Arab siege and sack of Thessalonike by moving on the city themselves.<sup>101</sup> Clearly Leo VI was hardly unaware of the threat that the Bulgarians could still pose, a fact which has a bearing on Dagron's verdict on the emperor's attitude to the Bulgarians as expressed in the *Taktika*; Dagron accused Leo of underestimating the danger they presented to the Byzantine empire, asserting that he 'le mesure encore mal, croit définitive ou durable une accalmie passagère, et compte sur la christianisation pour conduire ce peuple au même processus d'assimilation que les Slaves'.<sup>102</sup> Karlin-Hayter also commented on Leo's reflections on the Bulgarians, asserting that 'The Bulgarian war did not appeal to him ideologically'.<sup>103</sup> Runciman was of this view also, stating that Leo's 'tender Christian conscience made him dislike to fight fellow-believers'.<sup>104</sup> These assertions emerge as hardly fair or accurate when a more careful consideration of what the emperor says in the *Taktika* is made. In the section on how other nations fight and how the Romans should fight them Leo does mention the nation of the Bulgars, but declares that since Byzantium is now at peace with this nation and the Bulgars are a Christian people he will not bother to describe their tactics and how the Byzantines should counter them.<sup>105</sup> Such an attitude appears very

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<sup>99</sup> For these other missions see Koliass, *Choerosphactès*, 113, 8-13. See also the comments of Shepard, 'Peacemaker', 11-12, who questions the reliability of Choirospaktes's evidence, believing him to be exaggerating the details of the embassies for his own glorification. However it needs to be remembered that Leo VI presumably read Choirospaktes's account of these embassies and would have known the truth or falsity of the information; given that Choirospaktes was seeking to secure his release from exile from the emperor it seems unlikely that he would falsify such information at the risk of annoying the emperor. It is noteworthy that Shepard, 'Peacemaker', 20-21, believes Nikolaos's account of the conclusion of Symeon's visit to Constantinople in 913 for the very reason that Symeon read it.

<sup>100</sup> For the date see Jenkins, Laourdas and Mango, 'Nine Orations', 10-11. Shepard, 'Peacemaker', 18, suggests that these forts may have been in Symeon's hands since the mid-890s.

<sup>101</sup> Again see the comments of Shepard, 'Peacemaker', 12-13, 18.

<sup>102</sup> Dagron and Mihăescu, *Traité sur la guérilla*, 152.

<sup>103</sup> Karlin-Hayter, 'Military Affairs', 40.

<sup>104</sup> Runciman, *Bulgarian Empire*, 146.

<sup>105</sup> PG 107, 957, 18. 44.

foolish given that Leo was perfectly aware of how great a headache the Bulgars could be, and how much injury they had so recently inflicted on Byzantium. But the emperor's words should not be taken at face value. Although he does not describe the Bulgars at war he does go into considerable detail about the Turks (Magyars), who were neighbours of the Bulgarians, and the very people whose help Leo had enlisted against Symeon. Whilst discussing these people Leo draws attention to the fact that the military practices of the Bulgars and the Turks are similar, and various facets of Turkish behaviour that he describes are equally appropriate, if not more so, to the Bulgarians. When he describes the Scythian method of arrangement in battle he comments that only the Turks and the Bulgars follow the same method.<sup>106</sup> His report that the Turks are insatiable for money and despise oaths and break agreements gives rise to the sensation that what he is saying is really directed toward the subject of the Bulgarians. This sensation holds true for the rest of the information that the emperor presents, especially since it appears that the Byzantines had more experience of dealing and fighting with the Bulgarians than with the Turks.<sup>107</sup> Leo forces this notion himself, commenting that the Bulgars differ only from the Turks in that they are no longer pagan and no longer nomadic pastoralists.<sup>108</sup> The emperor even has to excuse himself for writing so much about the Turks and how they fight and how the Byzantines should fight them for he admits that at the time of writing they are not enemies of the empire, but are eager to be received as its subjects<sup>109</sup>, a detail that seems to fit with what the chronicles tell of the relations between the Magyars and Byzantium. The question is then begged as to why the emperor talks in such detail about the Turks. The explanation is surely that Leo is really writing about the Bulgarians whom he constantly compares to the Turks.<sup>110</sup> This enabled him to address a significant military issue whilst at the same time maintaining the notion that all is peace and harmony between Byzantium and Bulgaria, a notion that he knew had a fragile reality; perhaps it would have been impolitic to describe in an imperial document how to wage war on an enemy who had just been pacified and who had representatives attending court occasions in Constantinople as 'friends' of the empire. It should not

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<sup>106</sup> *PG* 107, 956, 18. 43, 957, 18. 45.

<sup>107</sup> *PG* 107, 957, 18. 47.

<sup>108</sup> *PG* 107, 960, 18. 61.

<sup>109</sup> *PG* 107, 964, 18. 76.

<sup>110</sup> Another example is *PG* 107, 964, 18. 75. For this conclusion see also Shepard, 'Peacemaker', 11, 34 n. 17.

be overlooked either that Leo includes in his *Taktika* certain measures that had been used against the Bulgarians, namely the appeal to the Magyars<sup>111</sup> and the device of the planted spike that Nikephoros Phokas had implemented against their cavalry.<sup>112</sup> Dagron, Karlin-Hayter and Runciman were thus too easily fooled by the emperor's tongue; perhaps the Bulgarians were also. Although peace had been secured after the war of 896 Leo had no delusions as to the danger that the neighbouring kingdom could present to Byzantium. Ostensibly however peace did hold, and despite its terms it can be counted as one of the successes of the reign, for Byzantium was no longer distracted by the destructive and unexpected conflict with so close a Christian neighbour; she could now devote more attention to the accepted problem of the Arab threat.

By the ninth century the land war with the Arabs on the eastern frontier had fallen into a rhythmical pattern of tit-for-tat seasonal raids<sup>113</sup>; the real threat to the security of the Byzantine empire came from Arab sea power.<sup>114</sup> With the previous eastern enemy of Persia Byzantium had had little to worry about as regards naval warfare, a fact that probably explains why the navy of the empire had been a neglected and negligible force. With the advent of the Arab empire in the seventh century the Byzantine empire received a serious shock, for here was an enemy that fought on both land and sea. The development of the Arabs into a significant sea power was facilitated by their occupation of Alexandria (642) and the coast of Syria. Byzantine control of the Mediterranean was quickly threatened; Cyprus was taken in 649, Rhodes in 654, Kos fell too, and Crete was assaulted. By 674 an Arab fleet was able to approach and threaten Constantinople itself, and this was the first of several such instances. In 678 an assault on the imperial city was repelled by the first recorded use of Greek fire, an inflammable liquid that ignited on impact, but this did not deter further assaults.<sup>115</sup> By the ninth and tenth centuries the sea-based war had attained its zenith. The Islamic occupation of Crete c.

<sup>111</sup> PG 107, 956, 18. 42.

<sup>112</sup> PG 107, 800, 11. 26. See E. McGeer, 'Tradition and Reality in the *Taktika* of Nikephoros Ouranos', *DOP*, 45 (1991), 129-140, esp. 134-135.

<sup>113</sup> See Haldon and Kennedy, 'Arab-Byzantine Frontier'.

<sup>114</sup> See V. Christides, *The Conquest of Crete by the Arabs (CA. 824). A Turning Point in the Struggle between Byzantium and Islam* (Athens, 1984); G. C. Miles, 'Byzantium and the Arabs: Relations in Crete and the Aegean Area', *DOP*, 18 (1964), 1-32; K. M. Setton, 'On the Raids of the Moslems in the Aegean in the Ninth and Tenth Centuries and their Alleged Occupation of Athens', *AJA*, 58 (1954), 311-319.

<sup>115</sup> Christides, *Conquest of Crete*, 64, asserts that Byzantine writers 'exaggerate the destructive power' of Greek fire.

824 was of particular significance, given the strategic importance of the island in the Mediterranean; Christides observes that Crete 'separates or rather connects on the one hand the Aegean Sea and the Greek peninsula, and on the other Asia Minor, Syria and Egypt'<sup>116</sup>, whilst Miles describes the island as 'that all-important strategic key to the evanescent but sporadically long-protracted Arab successes not only in the Aegean as well as in the Ionian and Adriatic seas'.<sup>117</sup> This situation seems to have met with a response from the Byzantines, for they directed their attention to the condition and status of their navy; by the end of the ninth century, as the *Kletorologion* of Philotheos reveals, the *officium* of the *drugarios* of the fleet had been organised, and two new maritime themes, those of the Aegean sea and Samos, had been created to take their place alongside that of the extant Cibyrrheot theme.<sup>118</sup> These innovations occurred at some point between the early reign of Michael III (a *Taktikon* from 843 does not contain these details) and 899 when Philotheos wrote his work. A likely moment for these innovations is the reign of Basil I (867-886) which saw a marked increase in the use and prominence of the Byzantine navy. During Leo's reign the naval situation was particularly bad for Byzantium. Vasiliev stressed that during this period the empire suffered its most important defeats at sea, and Christides comments that in the time of Leo VI 'the Byzantine naval strength was at its lowest ebb'.<sup>119</sup> An alleged Arab occupation of Athens, disproved by Setton, was dated to the period 896-902 because Leo's 'military and naval ventures against the Arabs were notoriously unsuccessful'.<sup>120</sup> Certainly those who commanded the Arab naval forces and worked in tandem with the land offensives of the Abbasids in Asia Minor achieved infamous successes. As in the case of Symeon of Bulgaria the emperor was extremely unlucky in the quality and character of the leading enemies whom he had to contend with. The most famous admirals of the day were Leo the Tripolite and Damianos, who like Symeon had had inside experience of Byzantium; they were both Byzantines who had been captured in war, subsequently converted to Islam and then worked for the other side. Leo originally hailed from Cilician Attaleia<sup>121</sup> whilst Damianos was known to be a

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<sup>116</sup> Christides, *Conquest of Crete*, 38.

<sup>117</sup> Miles, 'Crete and the Aegean', 10.

<sup>118</sup> See Ahrweiler, *Byzance et la mer*, 99.

<sup>119</sup> Vasiliev, *Byzance et les Arabes*, II, 1, 219; Christides, *Conquest of Crete*, 219.

<sup>120</sup> Setton, 'Occupation of Athens', 314.

<sup>121</sup> *TC*, 366.

Greek.<sup>122</sup> Ironically it was these men of Byzantine origin who 'launched the most savage raids against the Byzantines in the Aegean' and formed an integral part of 'a shocking blitz which can be compared with the land successes of the Arabs in the seventh century'.<sup>123</sup> An examination of this blitz and the emperor's response to it makes up the rest of this chapter.

For the history of the naval conflict during the reign the incidents enumerated by the Byzantine chroniclers are augmented by information from their Arab counterparts, most notably Tabari. It is he who supplies the first known naval assault of the reign, when in 888 the eunuch Yazaman, governor of Tarsus, undertook a sea raid and captured four Byzantine vessels.<sup>124</sup> Vasiliev conjectures that Yazaman also played a naval role in the assault of 891 on Salandu, a coastal town of western Cilicia.<sup>125</sup> The first detail of naval warfare that the Byzantine chroniclers record in the reign is the siege and capture of Samos and its *strategos* Paspalas, which has been dated to the period of August 891—May 893.<sup>126</sup> The chroniclers often refer to places being 'taken' when they report Arab attacks on islands and coastal sites, yet the Arab objective was not to conquer Byzantine locations but merely to ruin them by sacking, and then removing the population; as with the land war the mentality seems to have been raiding rather than conquering. The next known incident was a successful sea raid by the eunuch Raghīb in 898; he took 3000 Byzantine sailors prisoner, decapitated them and burned their ships. He is also reported to have captured several Byzantine fortresses, but the location of these is not specified.<sup>127</sup> Vasiliev attached great significance to this defeat, asserting that it caused the enfeeblement of the Byzantine fleet which protected the coasts of the empire and thus led to the subsequent famed successes of the Arabs, especially from 902-904.<sup>128</sup> Raghīb however soon met his end though not at Byzantine hands; he had earned the disfavour of the caliph Mutatid (892-902) and was imprisoned in 899 and quickly died.<sup>129</sup> This event had repercussions for the naval force

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<sup>122</sup> See *Tabari*, vol. 38, 34, n. 180; *Nicholas. Letters*, 9. 31-33; Eutychios of Alexandria, in Vasiliev, *Byzance et les Arabes*, II. 2, 26.

<sup>123</sup> Christides, *Conquest of Crete*, 161, 157.

<sup>124</sup> *Tabari*, vol. 37, 157. Yazaman, a dreaded enemy of the Byzantines who was reputedly depicted in Byzantine churches, died on 23 October 891 during a land raid, and was buried in Tarsus: see *Tabari*, vol. 37, 175.

<sup>125</sup> Vasiliev, *Byzance et les Arabes*, II. 1, 122.

<sup>126</sup> Jenkins, 'Chronological Accuracy', 106.

<sup>127</sup> *Tabari*, vol. 38, 73.

<sup>128</sup> Vasiliev, *Byzance et les Arabes*, II. 1, 133.

<sup>129</sup> *Tabari*, vol. 38, 79; Vasiliev, *Byzance et les Arabes*, II. 1, 140.

of Tarsus for in 900 the caliph ordered the raiding ships to be burned; in fact it was Damianos who was behind this measure for he held a grudge against the people of Tarsus for having supported Raghīb against him.<sup>130</sup> Among the ships burned were about fifty old ones of an outmoded design on which a lot of money had been spent. The Byzantines may have been glad at this self-defeating measure, but as Vasiliev points out the Muslims were not just dependent on the fleet of Tarsus. Any benefit from the incident was certainly short-lived, for not much later, probably in 901, Damianos led an expedition that resulted in the capture of Demetrias in Thessaly.<sup>131</sup> However this year also saw a successful Byzantine land and sea attack against the Arabs.<sup>132</sup> News of this assault reached Bagdad from Muslim merchants at al-Raqqah, who reported that the Byzantines had arrived in many ships and that Byzantine cavalry had come to Kaysum, mid-way between Samosata and Maras. More than 15,000 Muslims were driven off into captivity. The Arab response came soon, for in late 902 or early 903 the island of Lemnos was occupied and its inhabitants were taken prisoner.<sup>133</sup> It is striking that the Arab naval incursions were coming ever closer to the centre of Byzantine power; only two years later Constantinople itself was approached.

This incident formed part of the most infamous of all the Arab naval assaults on the Byzantine empire during the reign of Leo VI, the sacking of Thessalonike in the summer of 904.<sup>134</sup> As news reached the emperor that the Arab navy (which was being commanded by Leo the Tripolite) was approaching the Hellespont he dispatched the *drungarios* of the fleet Eustathios to repel the enemy. However Eustathios was forced to turn tail and the Arabs pursued him up the Hellespont as far as Parion. Then for some reason the Arabs returned back the way they had come, and were followed by the Byzantine fleet which was now headed by Himerios the *protasekretis*.<sup>135</sup> Sailing

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<sup>130</sup> *Tabari*, vol. 38, 91; Vasiliev, *Byzance et les Arabes*, II, 1, 141.

<sup>131</sup> *GMC*, 860. For the date see Grumel, 'Chronologie', 34-36.

<sup>132</sup> *Tabari*, vol. 38, 97; Vasiliev, *Byzance et les Arabes*, II, 1, 141.

<sup>133</sup> *GMC*, 861. For the date see Jenkins, 'Chronological Accuracy', 107.

<sup>134</sup> See *GMC*, 862-863.

<sup>135</sup> Why Leo appointed Himerios to command the navy is unclear. Herlong, *Social Mobility*, 106, has pointed out that there was a history of naval experience in Himerios's family. As to why the Arabs turned back from Constantinople, the chronicles state that it was God's will, but such an explanation does not satisfy modern historians; Christides, *Conquest of Crete*, 56 and 161, has reckoned that the approach on Constantinople was 'just a distracting gimmick', a method of 'psychological warfare'.

via Abydos, Strobilos<sup>136</sup>, Imbros and Samothrace, the Byzantines eventually encountered the Arab fleet anchored at Thasos, but dared not attack. The Arabs then homed in on Thessalonike as a target, which fell to them at the end of July 904; its *strategos* Leo Katzilakios was taken prisoner and Byzantine blood was shed. What the Byzantine fleet was doing whilst Thessalonike was assaulted and taken is unrecorded. An Arab report on the sack adds to the knowledge of its details.<sup>137</sup> Leo apparently killed 500 men and captured a like number, whilst rescuing 400 Muslim captives. Further, 60 Byzantine ships were seized and loaded with booty. As to the ultimate deliverance of the city the chronicles relate that this came about through accident rather than design. The story goes that a *koubikoularios* called Rhodophyles had been on his way to Sicily on some matter that involved taking along 100 pounds of gold when he had fallen ill on his journey and taken refuge in Thessalonike. Whilst he was recovering there the city was captured by the Arabs. The Tripolite took Rhodophyles prisoner, and learning that he had in his possession such wealth tortured him to discover its whereabouts, but the eunuch died without divulging the information. The gold was found by another imperial official the *asekretis* Symeon, who was himself on a mission, taking a gift to the Bulgars.<sup>138</sup> With both these material assets Symeon was able to enter into a deal with Leo and the Arabs would depart without destroying Thessalonike. This bargain was carried out, and the *Life of Euthymios* notes that in addition to sparing the city Leo even forewent most of the Byzantine captives. The Arabs sailed home safely via Crete without suffering any retaliation from Himerios.

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<sup>136</sup> Vasiliev, *Byzance et les Arabes*, II, 1, 166, identifies this with the Strobilos opposite Kos (for which see C. Foss, 'Strobilos and Related Sites', *Anatolian Studies*, 38 (1988), 147-174, repr. *History and Archaeology of Byzantine Asia Minor* (Aldershot, 1990), XII). If this is correct it will have taken Himerios time to track down the enemy fleet, and thus the assault on Thessalonike occurred a considerable amount of time after the initial approach on Constantinople. However E. Malamut, *Les îles de l'empire byzantin VIIIe-XIIIe siècles*, II (Paris, 1988), 503-504 and 657, whilst recognising a Strobilos as the coastal town of Asia Minor facing Kos appears to think that Himerios's Strobilos is in a different locality, between Abydos and Imbros, judging from the map she gives of the movements of Leo of Tripoli and Himerios in 904. Certainly there was more than one Strobilos: see Foss, 'Strobilos', esp. 168-169.

<sup>137</sup> See Grégoire, 'Le communiqué'; *Tabari*, vol. 38, 148. *VE*, 101. 10-19, also touches on the sack of Thessalonike.

<sup>138</sup> The reason for Symeon's presence in Thessalonike is supplied by the *VE*. It is possible that Leo Choïrosphaktes then had to take over Symeon's embassy to the Bulgars, thus providing the context for Leo's third embassy.

From such a story the defence and subsequent rescue of Thessalonike does appear rather shambolic; it is the fact that Symeon used his own initiative that saved the city from further harm. Commenting several years later the patriarch Nikolaos was certainly critical of the governmental response to the attack, relating that 'The Thessalonians begged for help day by day, but those here [Constantinople] delayed sending the fleet thither and so the situation was lost'.<sup>139</sup> Nikolaos may overstate his case, for the fleet had followed the Arabs; it was just that it took no known action. It is easy to see why the failure to prevent the seizure and sacking of Thessalonike is considered as one of Leo's major blunders. It is necessary however to consider the event further. The fact is, as Christides has asserted, that the Arab naval force involved consisted of an unusually large number of ships.<sup>140</sup> Leo the Tripolite appears to have combined forces with Damianos and Egyptians for the assault of 904.<sup>141</sup> Even if one is wary of using Kaminiates's evidence it is likely that the Arab naval force was larger than normal given the extreme reluctance of the Byzantine navy to engage the enemy. It was surely better to stand off and minimise the destruction and loss. Part of the Byzantine hesitation may be explained also by the fact that this was Himerios's first recorded naval experience, though even Eustathios declined to enter battle. With regard to the buying off of Leo the Tripolite this was probably less spontaneous than is made out, for the story begs many questions. Why was Rhodophyles taking such a large amount of gold to Sicily? Why was it abandoned and how did Symeon manage to come across it so adroitly? Rather than simply resigning Thessalonike to its fate Leo VI seems to have sought a diplomatic solution to the problem by buying off the Arabs. As the story stands it wants to present the salvation of the city in a miraculous light, as the result of a series of coincidences. But diplomacy and military inaction are not the whole story either.<sup>142</sup> Too much attention has been focused on the city of Thessalonike. The emperor's *Taktika* reveals that it was Byzantine practice to respond to a naval assault by launching a land

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<sup>139</sup> *Nicholas. Letters*, 326. 64-66.

<sup>140</sup> Christides, *Conquest of Crete*, 61.

<sup>141</sup> Christides, *Conquest of Crete*, 161, 168.

<sup>142</sup> Certainly Thessalonike was not simply abandoned to its fate. An inscription on the walls of the city indicates that they were repaired under Leo prior to the capture of the city in July 904: see J.-M. Speiser, 'Inventaires en vue d'un recueil des inscriptions historiques de Byzance, I. Les inscriptions de Thessalonique', *TM*, 5 (1973), 145-180, esp. 162-163, and note that Vasiliev, *Byzance et les Arabes*, II. 1, 180, wrongly dated the repairs to after the assault of 904.

attack<sup>143</sup>, and this is exactly what happened in 904. It is well known that in November of this year Andronikos Doukas won a victory at Maras, and Vasiliev did conjecture that this was a revenge-inspired attack for the assault on Thessalonike.<sup>144</sup> Yet Tabari also records a massive Byzantine land attack earlier in the same year prior to the fall of Thessalonike, the report of this campaign reaching the Muslims between 18 June and 16 July.<sup>145</sup> The emperor 'had sent ten crosses with one hundred thousand men against the border towns and...a number of them had moved on al-Hadath. They had raided and burned, and they had captured every Muslim they had been able to'. Given the aggressive character of this raid it seems obvious that it should be viewed as Leo's angry military response to the Arab encroachment on regions of the empire so close to Constantinople itself. Vasiliev was mistaken to divorce the two incidents, for although the Byzantine land assault was effective before the fall of Thessalonike it must be remembered that the Byzantine authorities knew of the presence of the Arab fleet well before the city was taken. It is inaccurate to accuse Leo VI of having done nothing in reaction to the Arab assault of 904, for he took the accepted response of his day, and effectively too. It can also be argued to a certain degree that the fate of Thessalonike in 904 was of more significance in the psychological sphere than the physical one. Not only was Thessalonike the second city of the empire it was believed that it had the heavenly protection of St Demetrios, who had always rescued her from sieges in the past. The fall of the city in 904 thus struck the Byzantine psyche a terrible blow, as reflected in the writings related to the event. Not only is there the extended account in the chronicles but in Constantinople the patriarch Nikolaos delivered a sermon on the capture of Thessalonike, whilst the emperor composed a lament on the fall.<sup>146</sup> The real cause of concern seems to have been the thought that if Demetrios could abandon Thessalonike was there then any guarantee that the Virgin would continue to protect Constantinople.

The events of 904 are considered by Byzantinists to have galvanised the Byzantines into taking action against the Arab naval prob-

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<sup>143</sup> *PG* 107, 980, 18. 139.

<sup>144</sup> Vasiliev, *Byzance et les Arabes*, II, 1, 181.

<sup>145</sup> *Tabari*, vol. 38, 147. Vasiliev, *Byzance et les Arabes*, II, 1, 163, noted this incident, but dated the report to 19 May-17 June and did not connect it with events closer to Constantinople.

<sup>146</sup> For Nikolaos's sermon see *Nicholas. Miscellaneous Writings*, 8-17. For evidence of Leo's poem see Maas, 'Literarisches'.

lem.<sup>147</sup> It is tempting to conclude that the new commander of the fleet Himerios (also holding the office of logothete of the drome) made the difference, but the emperor's own concern about the question of naval warfare should be recognised. This concern is reflected not just by the addition of the *Naumachika* to the *Taktika*, for Leo had already addressed naval issues in the work (constitutions 18 and 20 of the Ambrosian edition). The emperor notes that the Cilician Saracens fight on the sea as well as on the land, and assault the coast of the empire.<sup>148</sup> He recommends that if the Arabs launch a naval attack the *strategos* should retaliate with a land assault; if however the situation is reversed the *strategos* of the Cibyrrehot theme is to attack the shores near Tarsus and Adana.<sup>149</sup> Leo also favours a tactic that was used by his father, that of a joint land and sea attack upon the Arabs.<sup>150</sup> He highlights the danger posed to coastal lands and islands, and advises land attack to deter the enemy.<sup>151</sup> In the case of a projected combined fleet from Egypt, Cilicia and Syria, Leo asserts that Cyprus should be used as a base from which to attack the diverse fleets before they unite; alternatively one can set fire to them before they set out as they lie in harbour.<sup>152</sup> Such advice probably predates 904, as may the *Naumachika* itself, so it would be erroneous to suggest that the emperor's concern was suddenly prompted by the events concerning Thessalonike. Certainly there is no doubt that the Byzantine fleet was active prior to 904, even if it was not always successful. The Bulgarian war of 895 and the Sicilian situation that led to the fall of Taormina in 902 distracted the Byzantine fleet from its usual sphere of operations, thus leaving the Aegean more vulnerable to Arab assaults. Indeed Theophanes Continuatus specifically notes that the Arabs did exploit the fact that the Byzantines were preoccupied with the Bulgarian problem.<sup>153</sup> This calls to mind one of Karlin-Hayter's fundamental observations on Byzantium's ability to defend herself effectively; because she had to contend with war on several fronts at once she would find her resources stretched.<sup>154</sup> The situation may have been aggravated by the Arab assault on Samos in 891-893,

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<sup>147</sup> Ostrogorsky, *State*, 58; Vasiliev, *Byzance et les Arabes*, II, 1, 181; Jenkins, *Imperial Centuries*, 204; Karlin-Hayter, 'Military Affairs', 35.

<sup>148</sup> *PG* 107, 980, 18. 138.

<sup>149</sup> *PG* 107, 980, 18. 139.

<sup>150</sup> *PG* 107, 980-981, 18. 140.

<sup>151</sup> *PG* 107, 1049, 20. 139.

<sup>152</sup> *PG* 107, 1072, 20. 212.

<sup>153</sup> *TC*, 366.

<sup>154</sup> Karlin-Hayter, 'Military Affairs', 17.

for it was after all the base of one of the three naval themes of the empire.

The figure of Himerios dominates naval events after 904, but his build up to the role as aggressor against the Arabs is gradual; his first recorded victory on St Thomas's day (6 October) 906 was won whilst he was in defensive mode.<sup>155</sup> Significantly the chronicles only report the victory because it was an integral part of their real concern, the story of the desertion of Andronikos Doukas to the Arabs. This is a salutary reminder that for their knowledge of events of Leo's reign Byzantinists are largely dependent on what the biased and pessimistic chroniclers chose to record. Indeed the only other information presented by them about Himerios's naval activity is negative: his defeat at the end of Leo's reign. It is other sources that provide further detail on Himerios's actions. One favourable witness is Niketas the *magistros*, a prominent in-law of the emperor Romanos I Lekapenos (920-944). In his *Life of Theoktista* he warmly praises the achievements of the emperor Leo VI and his 'archon' of the drome and the fleet Himerios, under whom he had served.<sup>156</sup> Niketas had found the material for his story about Theoktista when he stopped off on the island of Paros whilst on a mission to Crete for the emperor; the most likely explanation for this incident of diplomacy is the retrieving of the Byzantines captured in Thessalonike by Leo the Tripolite, whom he had sold on Crete during his voyage home.<sup>157</sup> Evidence of Himerios's more aggressive activity comes not from Tabari but from Masudi. He relates that between 20 September 909 and 8 September 910 the commander of the Byzantine fleet, whom he calls Faris, fell on the coast of Syria and seized the fortress of al-Qubba after a long struggle, and also took the town of Laodicea where he captured a large number of prisoners.<sup>158</sup> Perhaps this action was in response to the Arab land assault in September 909 led from Tarsus by Munis al-

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<sup>155</sup> *GMC*, 866-867. For the dating of Himerios's victory to 906 see Chapter Eight below.

<sup>156</sup> See the *Life of St Theoktista*, *AASS*, Nov IV, 221-233.

<sup>157</sup> Christides, *Conquest of Crete*, 167. Vasiliev, *Byzance et les Arabes*, II, 1, 208-210, and Miles, 'Crete and the Aegean', 8, n. 28, suggest that the object of the mission was to neutralise Crete during the coming Byzantine naval campaign against Cyprus and Laodicea, but this theory fails to convince.

<sup>158</sup> See Vasiliev, *Byzance et les Arabes*, II, 2, 43. Among these captives was probably the famed Harun-Ibn-Yahya who found himself as a prisoner of war in Constantinople towards the end of the reign of Leo VI, having been captured by the Byzantines and brought by ship from the city of Ascalon on the Palestinian shore to Attaleia, and thence to Byzantium: see Vasiliev, 'Harun-Ibn-Yahya'; H. Grégoire, 'Un captif arabe à la cour de l'empereur Alexandre', *Byz*, 7 (1932), 666-673.

Khadim or to the summer raid of 910 led by al-Qasim b. Sima, which had both resulted in the taking of a great number of Byzantine prisoners.<sup>159</sup> Connected with the raid on the Syrian coast may be Himerios's activities on Cyprus<sup>160</sup>; these are not known directly but only from their controversial aftermath, when Damianos wreaked revenge. At some point Himerios had been on Cyprus and had broken the agreed precepts governing the island by capturing and killing some Muslims, for Cyprus was a strictly neutral zone shared by Byzantium and the Arabs.<sup>161</sup> Damianos reacted sharply, assaulting the island for four months in 911 or 912, taking prisoners and causing destruction. Himerios's last campaign, and the last of Leo's reign, was that in 911 apparently mounted against the island of Crete. The details for this campaign are owed to an entry in the *Book of Ceremonies*.<sup>162</sup> Vasiliev reckons that the empire-wide force comprised 177 ships, 34,200 rowers, 7140 soldiers, 700 Russians<sup>163</sup>, and 5089 Mardaites, and concludes that 'Byzance s'était sérieusement préparée à la lutte contre les Arabes d'Orient'.<sup>164</sup> Unfortunately all that is known of the campaign itself is that it was evidently a failure; the chronicles record that towards the end of Leo's reign, in October (presumably 911)<sup>165</sup>, Himerios was defeated at sea by both Leo the Tripolite and Damianos. The failure of the campaign however does not affect the fact that in the last stages of his reign Leo VI had set in

<sup>159</sup> *Tabari*, vol. 38, 193. The results of these two summer campaigns are provided by another Arab historian, Arib: see Vasiliev, *Byzance et les Arabes*, II, 2, 59.

<sup>160</sup> Vasiliev, *Byzance et les Arabes*, II, 1, 211. He dates Himerios's actions on Cyprus to summer 910, asserting that they were part of his policy to keep the various Arab fleets apart.

<sup>161</sup> For the incident see *Nicholas. Letters*, 8, 108—11, 157; Grégoire, 'Saint Démétrianos'; Masudi, *Byzance et les Arabes*, II, 2, 43. For the position of Cyprus under the Arabs and Byzantines see R. J. H. Jenkins, 'Cyprus between Byzantium and Islam, A. D. 688-965', *Studies Presented to D. M. Robinson*, II, edd. G. Mylonas and D. Raymond (St Louis, Missouri, 1953), 1006-1014, repr. *Studies on*, XXII.

<sup>162</sup> *De Cer.*, 651. See Vasiliev's analysis of the information in *Byzance et les Arabes*, II, 1, 201-207.

<sup>163</sup> This detail appears to confirm the reality of Leo's relationship with the Russians in the latter stages of his reign as related in *The Russian Primary Chronicle*. See Vasiliev, 'Second Russian Attack', and *Byzance et les Arabes*, II, 1, 196-198; R. J. H. Jenkins, 'The Supposed Russian Attack on Constantinople in 907: Evidence of Pseudo-Symeon', *Speculum*, 24 (1949), 403-406, repr. *Studies on*, XII.

<sup>164</sup> Vasiliev, *Byzance et les Arabes*, II, 1, 201-207.

<sup>165</sup> As R. J. H. Jenkins, 'The Date of Leo VI's Cretan Expedition', *Hell*, 4 (1953), 277-281, repr. *Studies on*, XIV, notes Pseudo-Symeon places the battle not in October but in the eighth month of the campaign, making it easier to comprehend why Himerios only returned to Constantinople after the death of Leo VI: the final battle did not occur in October 911 but only after the death of Leo VI in May 912. However Jenkins later rejected his theory: see 'Chronological Accuracy', 105.

motion the aim of wresting the strategic site of Crete from the Arabs with the intention of securing the shores and seas of the Byzantine empire. Although this was not a new tactic, and continued to be pursued until Nikephoros Phokas achieved success in 961, it demonstrates that the assertion that Leo VI had no foreign policy is inaccurate.<sup>166</sup>

In conclusion it is clear that although the emperor was not a soldier himself he did ponder the military threats facing the empire, and attempted to respond to them. The military situation under Leo was distinctively marked by a climax in the growing threat from Arab naval assaults and by a sudden outburst of conflict with the Bulgarian kingdom, a problem that Basil I had been spared, and indeed which had not faced any emperor since the death of khan Krum. The Bulgarian situation preoccupied the Byzantines for over three years of conflict, and after 896 Leo had still to be wary of this volatile neighbour, though peace ostensibly lasted for the rest of his reign. The problem of the Arab navy was severe, but less well recorded by the chroniclers than the Bulgarian war, which was a novel event. Despite the fragmentary record it can be asserted that Leo did show particular concern about the naval threat to the empire, and at the end of his reign he hoped to find a solution to it by recapturing the strategic island of Crete. In both spheres it is notable that the quality of the emperor's opponents was exceptional. Symeon, Damianos and Leo of Tripoli all had inside knowledge of Byzantium, which seems to have given them a vital edge over their enemy. Symeon was particularly distinctive in being unconstrained by the normal expectations of behaviour in warfare, a fact that wrong-footed the Byzantines several times. It must be appreciated then that in the nature of the problems that faced him Leo VI suffered to a large degree from bad luck. Further it is essential, as Karlin-Hayter illustrated, to recognise the pessimistic and biased nature of the chronicles, which reduce Leo's reign to a string of military failures. Balance must be injected into the picture both from other sources and from an understanding of how the Byzantines responded to war. On close inspection even the three major blunders which Karlin-Hayter permits to be attributed to Leo (the start of the Bulgarian war, the withdrawal from Bulgaria, and the failure to defend Thessalonike in 904) can be read in less negative terms. Whether successful or not it is clear that the emperor Leo VI was concerned about the military problems facing his empire and sought to address them.

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<sup>166</sup> For the Byzantine attempts to reconquer Crete see Christides, *Conquest of Crete*, 172.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### THE EMPEROR'S MEN: EUNUCHS AND *STRATEGOI*

For the functioning of his empire the emperor was dependent upon those officials whom he appointed to serve him, and it was these men who formed the senatorial order of the empire. Of course by the time of Leo VI the senatorial order as a body no longer had the power and functions it had once possessed during the Roman republic and the early empire; indeed the moment Augustus established his principate the position of the senate was compromised, and ultimately became redundant. It is well known that amongst his collection of new laws Leo included two that officially revoked the ancient rights of the senate<sup>1</sup>, but Karlin-Hayter regards these as essentially meaningless for they 'merely ratify a situation long since recognised'.<sup>2</sup> Yet the concept of the senate still had significance for Byzantium, for it denoted the secular ruling class of the empire, those men who were titled administrators or just titled, and whose prominence in society was reflected by the degree of their association with the emperor. As such it is still valid to talk of the emperor's relationship with the senatorial order, and despite the initial impression that his legislation creates there are indications the Leo VI was an emperor who had good relations with his senators. Karlin-Hayter noted this in her reading of the *Life of Euthymios*, citing the following two instances.<sup>3</sup> When the patriarch Nikolaos had refused the emperor admittance through the imperial doors to the nave of Hagia Sophia on Christmas day 906, and Leo had to content himself with entry to the *metatorion*, he wept when the gospel was read out 'moving his hearers to lament and weep with him, not only the Senate, but some of the very metropolitans'<sup>4</sup>; and when Leo was barred again on the feast of Epiphany 'the members of the Senate protested', urging the emperor to enter the main body of the church with them "as one of us".<sup>5</sup> Further examples of the closeness between the senate and the em-

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<sup>1</sup> *Novel 47* and *Novel 78*, in Noailles and Dain, *Les nouvelles*, 184-187, 270-271.

<sup>2</sup> Karlin-Hayter, 'Bad Name', 595.

<sup>3</sup> Karlin-Hayter, 'Bad Name', 595.

<sup>4</sup> *VE*, 77. 3-7.

<sup>5</sup> *VE*, 77. 31—79. 2.

peror can be found in the text. When Leo relates to Euthymios the story of his marriage to Theophano he casts the senate as a sympathetic witness of his plight<sup>6</sup>; the senate is presented again as sensitive to the emperor's feelings when he mourns the loss of his third wife in 901<sup>7</sup>; the senate had no qualms about recognising Leo's fourth wife as augusta.<sup>8</sup> It is also notable that after Leo's death when Nikolaos was restored to the patriarchate and summoned Euthymios to a tribunal senators stayed away in droves although they had been requested to attend.<sup>9</sup> It is easy to suspect that the presentation of the relationship between the emperor and the senate reflects not so much historical reality but the exploitation of the senate as a literary device to evoke support or opposition, yet the *Life* is not isolated in its testimony. The senate played a part in the protection of Leo from his father in 883 and in his release from prison in 886. As far as Pseudo-Symeon was concerned the senate achieved Leo's desire by condemning Photios at his trial in 887. Skylitzes narrates that as Leo realised death was approaching he summoned the senate and recalled the good relationship that had existed between them during his reign, and in return he urges it to look after the interests of his wife and son after his death.<sup>10</sup> Far more compelling than these examples are the words of Leo VI himself and those of the *De Administrando Imperio*. When Leo forced through the installation of his brother Stephen as patriarch at Christmas 886 he was confident of the support of the senate for his action. Recording that his father was responsible for the construction of an imperial galley specifically for the purpose of ceremonial jaunts by sea the *De Administrando Imperio* asserts that Leo 'was rather more hospitably inclined towards magisters and patricians and familiar friends of senatorial rank [than Basil I], and...always wished them to share his pleasure'.<sup>11</sup> Thus there are indications that Leo's good relationship

<sup>6</sup> *VE*, 41. 16-19.

<sup>7</sup> *VE*, 63. 16-65. 22.

<sup>8</sup> *VE*, 111. 20-21.

<sup>9</sup> *VE*, 119. 6-11.

<sup>10</sup> *Skylitzae*, 191. 12-192. 24. This scenario however must be viewed as dubious since the earlier chronicles have no record of it, and Skylitzes appends it to the demises of other emperors, such as Theophilos.

<sup>11</sup> *DAI*, I, 246. 22-24. Prior to the creation of an imperial barge by Leo VI the emperor had made use of a scarlet barge. When Basil I had gone on long distance jaunts he had used two galleys from the imperial navy. The barge had only been able to transport a limited number of men of senatorial rank, and only those that held specified posts. These were the *drugarios* of the watch, the *drugarios* of the fleet, the logothete of the drome, the hetairciarch, the *mystikos*, the secretary of pleas, the *domestikos* of the schools if he was present in Constantinople, the *parakoimomenos*, the *protovestiarios*, and those of the bed-chamber that the emperor wanted. Leo later had another galley built for these imperial journeys.

with the senatorial order was a matter of reality, and the emperor's relations with two distinct groups within this class shall be the focus of this chapter. These two distinct groups are the eunuchs of the imperial court, and the provincials of the eastern frontier who filled major military roles; the relationship of these men with Leo VI comprises a significant feature of his reign.

That eunuchs played a prominent part in the administration of the empire and the imperial court is well known.<sup>12</sup> They became increasingly important in such spheres from the end of the third century onwards; Hopkins wondered if it was 'the capture of the Persian king's harem by Galerius in AD 298' that had led to the 'proliferation of eunuchs in the Roman court'.<sup>13</sup> The emperor Julian (361-363) made a concerted effort to rid the palace of eunuchs, but after his brief reign they never looked back. The majority of eunuchs seem to have been of lowly or foreign origin<sup>14</sup>, though examples of eunuchs of Byzantine origin can be found, especially in the middle period.<sup>15</sup> The heavy use of eunuchs in the Byzantine empire has often been attributed to the fact that they were trustworthy in two respects; they could never aspire to be emperor themselves, and they could attend upon women without any danger of impropriety occurring.<sup>16</sup> The former factor is certainly valid, but the latter is over-rated; women and eunuchs could have relationships, it was just that there was no risk of impregnation. Hopkins provided more satisfying reasons as to why eunuchs were so valued. They could soak up criticisms that might have fallen on the emperor<sup>17</sup>; they 'acted as a lubricant preventing too much friction between the emperor and the other forces of the state which threatened his superiority'<sup>18</sup>; they met 'the need of a

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<sup>12</sup> See K. Hopkins, *Conquerors and Slaves* (Cambridge, 1978), 172-196; R. Guiland, *Recherches sur les institutions byzantines*, I (Amsterdam, 1967), 165-380, which collects his articles on eunuch jobs and titles, and contains his general overview 'Les eunuques dans l'empire byzantine. Etude de titulaire et de prosopographie byzantines', *REB*, 1 (1943), 197-238; H. Diner, *Emperors, Angels and Eunuchs. The Thousand Years of the Byzantine Empire*, tr. E. and C. Paul (London, 1938), 62-72; Runciman, *Romanus Lecapenus*, 29-30. On eunuchs in general see also K. Ringrose, 'Living in the Shadows: Eunuchs and Gender in Byzantium', *Third Sex, Third Gender*, ed. G. Herdt (New York, 1994), 85-109; S. Tougher, 'Byzantine Eunuchs: An Overview with Special Reference to Their Origin and Creation', *Men, Women and Eunuchs*, ed. E. James (forthcoming).

<sup>13</sup> Hopkins, *Conquerors*, 192-193.

<sup>14</sup> Hopkins, *Conquerors*, 181, 188-189.

<sup>15</sup> See Tougher, 'Overview'.

<sup>16</sup> Guiland, 'Les eunuques', 200, 215; Runciman, *Romanus Lecapenus*, 19.

<sup>17</sup> Hopkins, *Conquerors*, 174.

<sup>18</sup> Hopkins, *Conquerors*, 180.

divine emperor for human information and contact'.<sup>19</sup> Knowledge about their jobs, titles and position within Byzantine society is particularly good for the era of the late ninth century due to the existence of Philotheos's *Kletorologion*, a striking fact given that it has been appreciated that Leo VI was an emperor with a marked connection with eunuchs. Most famously Leo is known for his relationship with the Arab eunuch Samonas, whose career has been the subject of several studies.<sup>20</sup> The emperor's relationship with him dates to the period shortly after Zoe Zaoutzaina's death when her surviving relatives headed by her nephew Basil plotted against Leo to maintain their power. It seems that Samonas was a youthful servant in the house of Stylianos Zaoutzes, charged with the duty of filling the cups of dinner guests with water.<sup>21</sup> He was taken into Basil's confidence about the plot but promptly told the emperor of the threat to his life. Thus the conspiracy was crushed and Samonas was rewarded; not only did he acquire a third of the property of the plotters but he entered into Leo's service and received the title of *koubikouarios*, beginning his rise to the highest eunuch rank and post. The *Life of Euthymios* relates that he was soon promoted *nipsistiarios*<sup>22</sup>, whilst the chroniclers say that he was rewarded with the title of *protospatharios* in 900 for having saved Leo's life.<sup>23</sup> In 903 he is found escorting Zoe to the palace at the time of the St Mokios assassination attempt<sup>24</sup>, adding to the impression that he became Leo's trusted right-hand man. Much has been made of his role as a policeman or intelligence officer, based on the *Life of Basil the Younger*, for in this Samonas is responsible for the inquisition of the saint who was taken for a spy.<sup>25</sup> Leo's evident attachment to

<sup>19</sup> Hopkins, *Conquerors*, 187.

<sup>20</sup> See Rydén, 'Portrait'; Jenkins, 'Flight'; R. Janin, 'Un arabe ministre à Byzance: Samonas (IXe-Xe)', *EO*, 34 (1935), 307-318.

<sup>21</sup> The chronicles allege that Samonas was already a *koubikouarios* in the service of the emperor when the plot was exposed, but the version of the *Life of Euthymios* is believed to be more accurate here; Rydén, 'Portrait', 104, argues that the author of the *Life of Euthymios* is better informed due to Samonas's temporary confinement at Euthymios's monastery at Psamathia after his fall in 908. As to how the Arab eunuch slave came to be in the household of Stylianos it has been suggested that he had been taken as a prisoner of war, and perhaps even emasculated by the Byzantines themselves.

<sup>22</sup> *VE*, 51, 6-7. However from the information that Philotheos supplies on eunuch titles it would seem that this was a demotion: see Oikonomidès, *Listes*, 125, 22-127, 5. It is possible that between 899 and 900 the order of these titles was reversed.

<sup>23</sup> *GMC*, 859.

<sup>24</sup> *GMC*, 861.

<sup>25</sup> *PG* 109, 656. Jenkins, 'Flight', 221, stresses this notion. See also Karlin-Hayter, *VE, Commentary*, 177, who describes Samonas as 'Leo's valuable and trusted head of Security'.

this eunuch has been detected in the fact that he punished him mildly for his attempt to flee to his own country in 904<sup>26</sup>; he simply confined him to the house of the caesar Bardas for four months and on releasing him began the process of promotion again, creating him *patrikios*, the highest title a eunuch could aspire to.<sup>27</sup> Samonas even became the godfather of Leo's son Constantine in 906.<sup>28</sup> In the emperor's subsequent struggles with the church and the patriarch Nikolaos Samonas was firmly aiding and abetting Leo.<sup>29</sup> The *Life of Euthymios* reports that it was the *protovestiaros* Samonas who was dispatched in February 907 with the metropolitans to the exiled Nikolaos to extract his resignation.<sup>30</sup> It was surely in gratitude for his help during the tetragamy crisis that Samonas was promoted to the top exclusively-eunuch post of *parakoimomenos*, a job last held at the end of the reign of Michael III. Samonas continued to prove himself concerned for the emperor's wishes, and endeavoured to persuade the patriarch Euthymios to recognise Leo's fourth wife Zoe as augusta.<sup>31</sup> However not much later, in the early summer of 908, Samonas fell from grace having been exposed as the brain behind a scheme to implicate another court-eunuch, Constantine the Paphlagonian, whom Samonas had become jealous of; he was tonsured and confined to the monastery of Martinakios.<sup>32</sup> It is obvious then that Samonas did have a significant part to play in the reign, but only for the years 900-908, and even then his career was one of development not instantaneous preeminence. Further, his relationship with the emperor was not unique among eunuchs; there is a wider picture to examine, not the limited one of 'Leo and Samonas'. One Byzantinist who appreciated this fact was Guillard, who observed that Basil I did not seem to have 'une affection particulière pour les eunuques' but that 'Sous Léon VI, les eunuques retrouvèrent toute leur influence', stating that it was from among the eunuchs that this emperor chose his favourites.<sup>33</sup> Unfortunately Guillard then devoted most of his study on the eu-

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<sup>26</sup> *GMC*, 863-864. For the usual date of 904 see Jenkins, 'Flight', 227. However Jenkins, 'Chronological Accuracy', 107-108, recognises that the year of the flight could equally be 905.

<sup>27</sup> *GMC*, 864, links Samonas's liberation with Leo's *autokratoria* (the anniversary of his accession), but *Ps. Sym.*, 708, connects it with the birth of Constantine VII.

<sup>28</sup> *GMC*, 865.

<sup>29</sup> See *GMC*, 865; *ASM*, II, 94-104. Arethas's letter shows that Samonas was still *patrikios* at the end of 906: see *ASM*, II, 94. 4; Jenkins and Laourdas, 'Eight Letters', 366.

<sup>30</sup> *VE*, 91. 17-93. 12.

<sup>31</sup> *VE*, 111. 3-5.

<sup>32</sup> *GMC*, 869-870. For the date see Jenkins, 'Flight', 234.

<sup>33</sup> Guillard, 'Les eunuques', 221.

nuchs of the reign to the famous duo of Samonas and Constantine; the broader picture will be considered here.

Even before Leo became emperor in his own right in 886 he had a trusted eunuch at his side; when he was imprisoned for plotting to kill his father in 883 amongst his co-conspirators who suffered punishment also was his *protovestiaros* Niketas Helladikos.<sup>34</sup> It was Leo who restored Niketas Xylinites (the master of the augusta's table who had been suspected of a liaison with Eudokia Ingerine), appointing him to the position of *oikonomos* of Hagia Sophia. When Agion rebelled in southern Italy it was Constantine the master of the table whom Leo dispatched to head the campaign against him.<sup>35</sup> The *patrikios* and *protovestiaros* Theodosios was sent out with the army against the Bulgarians in 896, and died at the battle of Bulgarophygon; the loss of this eunuch is recorded as having caused the emperor particular grief.<sup>36</sup> The eunuch Christopher features in several episodes of the reign. When Leo punished two of Stylianos's familiars, the businessman Staurakios and the eunuch Mousikos, Christopher the *koitonites* was charged with assisting in the punishment of the eunuch by installing him in the Studite monastery.<sup>37</sup> Perhaps Christopher received promotion from the emperor for his part in this episode, for by 900 he had become *protovestiaros*; when Samonas came to report the nascent plot of Stylianos's relatives to the emperor at first Leo did not believe him. Thus Christopher, now *protovestiaros*, and the *koitonites* Kalokyris were dispatched to Samonas's room to eavesdrop on Basil's conversation with the eunuch, and were ordered to bring a written account of what they had heard to the emperor.<sup>38</sup> With the vindication of his accusations Samonas entered the emperor's service and began his rise, but Christopher did not immediately disappear from the scene; when news first reached Leo of the approach of the Arab fleet towards Constantinople in 904 the emperor was on his way to the dedication of the monastery of his *protovestiaros* Christopher in the emporion of Boutios.<sup>39</sup> Eunuch diplomats are also met in the reign. The eunuch Sinoutis, the *chartoularios* of the drome, was entrusted

<sup>34</sup> *GMC*, 846. Niketas became *papias* during the reign of Romanos Lekapenos.

<sup>35</sup> *GMC*, 852. This job was one of those specifically intended for eunuchs, though it is possible that 'bearded men' could hold eunuch jobs, the most famous example being that of Basil the Macedonian who was Michael III's *parakoimomenos*.

<sup>36</sup> *GMC*, 855; *De Them.*, 33.

<sup>37</sup> *GMC*, 857. A *koitonites* was one of the staff of the imperial chamber subordinate to the *parakoimomenos*: see Oikonomidès, *Listes*, 305. For the date of this episode see Jenkins, 'Chronological Accuracy', 106.

<sup>38</sup> *GMC*, 858.

<sup>39</sup> *GMC*, 862.

with missions to Taron and Iberia.<sup>40</sup> The *koubikoularios* Rhodophyles was on a mission to Sicily when he found himself enmeshed in the siege and capture of Thessalonike by the Arabs in 904.<sup>41</sup> Tabari reveals that eunuchs went on missions to the Arabs also. Shortly after the accession of al-Muktafi (902-908) to the caliphate in 902 Leo dispatched two diplomats to him at Bagdad, one of whom was a eunuch, bringing the new caliph gifts and captives and requesting an exchange of prisoners.<sup>42</sup> A few years later a pair of diplomats was again sent to the Arabs, one the maternal uncle of the emperor's son and the other the eunuch Basil, with the object of arranging an exchange of prisoners.<sup>43</sup> The former of these two diplomats has been equated with Leo Choirospaktes, who in his letters from exile to the emperor refers to a eunuch with whom he had shared a mission, and who subsequently slandered him in Constantinople and thus played a part in his disgrace and exile.<sup>44</sup> Finally there is the case of Constantine the Paphlagonian, as related by the chronicles.<sup>45</sup> The story goes that after the settling of the tetragamy crisis in 907 Samonas endeavoured to win favour with the fourth wife Zoe by presenting her with the gift of his eunuch servant Constantine, who had previously belonged to the *magistros* Basil.<sup>46</sup> However Samonas's plan began to backfire as Leo and Zoe both became very attached to the new eunuch in their lives. To rectify the situation Samonas resorted to slander, asserting that the empress and Constantine were having an affair.<sup>47</sup> Believing this to be true Leo entrusted Samonas with carrying out the punishment of Constantine; he was tonsured and placed in the monastery of St Tarasios. However the emperor began to miss Constantine, and so contrived his restoration. The *parakoimomenos* was instructed to transfer Constantine to Samonas's own monastery at Speira, where Leo then came to visit. On bumping

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<sup>40</sup> *DAI*, I, 190. 35-40. It has been conjectured that Sinoutis was probably 'a native of Siounia, in eastern Armenia': see *DAI*, II, 162.

<sup>41</sup> *GMC*, 863.

<sup>42</sup> *Tabari*, vol. 38, 133.

<sup>43</sup> *Tabari*, vol. 38, 181.

<sup>44</sup> Kolias, *Choerosphactès*, letter 25, 121-127. However Kolias, *Choerosphactès*, 56, identifies the slanderous eunuch as Sinoutis.

<sup>45</sup> See *GMC*, 869-870. For the origins of Constantine the Paphlagonian see the chronicle of Pseudo-Symeon and the *Synaxarion of Constantinople: Ps. Sym.*, 713-715; *AASS*, Propylaeum Novembris, 721-724.

<sup>46</sup> Perhaps Basil the *magistros* should be identified as Basil *epeiktes*, a share of whose property Samonas received having exposed the plot against the life of Leo VI.

<sup>47</sup> On the possibility of sexual relations between women and eunuchs see Hopkins, *Conquerors*, 194. Another example is the alleged affair between Eudokia Ingerine and the master of the augusta's table Niketas Xylinites, assuming that Niketas was indeed a eunuch.

into Constantine by 'accident' Leo called for him to be restored to his secular life, and the emperor and the eunuch returned to the palace together. Samonas continued to work for Constantine's disgrace, and hit upon the idea of writing a pamphlet reviling the emperor, which was presumably meant to be ascribed to Constantine. Samonas's secretary Constantine the Rhodian<sup>48</sup> wrote the document, and it was thrown into the *metatorion* of Hagia Sophia for the emperor to find, which he did. However the eunuch Constantine did not fall victim to the plot for one of Samonas's conspirators, the *megas koitonites* Michael Tzirethon, confessed what had happened to Leo, and the *parakoimomenos* duly fell from imperial favour. This proved to be positive for Constantine for he was quickly promoted to the post of *parakoimomenos*, thus attaining it in a far shorter time than Samonas himself. Leo also had a monastery constructed for him at Nosiai.<sup>49</sup>

From the above cases it emerges that Leo was served by several eunuchs during his reign, and that he had close relations with more than just Samonas. But the emperor seems also to have been concerned with eunuchs as a group, not simply as individuals. Leo is not known as a great builder, but undoubtedly the major construction of his reign was the church of St Lazaros and its connected monastery, sited on the north-eastern fringes of the palace complex inaugurated by Basil I that included the Nea, the Tzykanisterion, the Oikonomion, and Leo's bath house.<sup>50</sup> The church was built by the middle of the reign; it was in existence when the plot of the relatives of Zaoutzes was thwarted in 900<sup>51</sup>, and the *Life of Euthymios* can refer to it as 'new-built' in 901.<sup>52</sup> Leo even managed to locate the relics of both Lazaros (on Cyprus) and his sister Mary Magdalene (at Ephesus), and had them transported to Constantinople to be housed in this church.<sup>53</sup> What is intriguing to note is that the monastery which was linked with the church was specifically intended for eunuchs. Such an insti-

<sup>48</sup> For this man see Downey, 'Constantine the Rhodian'.

<sup>49</sup> *Ps. Sym.*, 713-715, possesses more information than the other chronicles about Constantine, concerning his father, the building of the monastery and his rise to prominence. Constantine's career was stalled after the death of Leo when Alexander came to power, but he resurfaced in 913 when Zoe Karbonopsina asserted her right to be regent for her son. Until Romanos Lekapenos seized power in 919 Constantine was one of the key ministers of the government.

<sup>50</sup> See *GMC*, 860, for the construction of the church and the monastery, and see also Janin, *Les églises et les monastères*, 309. For the Macedonian palace complex see Magdalino, 'Nea'.

<sup>51</sup> *GMC*, 859.

<sup>52</sup> *VE*, 63. 18-20.

<sup>53</sup> See Dolley, 'Translation', but note that his chronology is wrong for he was unaware of the evidence of Arethas's orations, which date the translation of Lazaros to the early 900s.

tution appears rare enough, and when taken in conjunction with what is known of Leo's links with his eunuch officials it takes on a greater significance. Leo also issued legislation concerning eunuchs. In *Novel* 26 he decreed in the most sympathetic tones that eunuchs should be able to adopt children.<sup>54</sup> Justinian had refused eunuchs this right on the grounds that if nature has not granted the faculty to have children then the law cannot communicate it, but Leo asserts that it is not nature that has taken this faculty away but the injustice of men, and states that it is not philanthropic to deprive eunuchs of their only chance to become fathers simply because they do not have the physical ability to do so. Thus it appears that Leo showed marked favour to eunuchs not just as individuals but as a group. Why this should be so needs to be considered.

In answering this query Hopkins's comment that 'We should be wary of evaluations of emperors as 'weak', which are based exclusively or mainly on whether eunuchs held power in their reign. For eunuchs flourished under powerful emperors like Valentinian I, even under Theodosius the Great, just as under an idle fop like Theodosius II' should be born in mind. Leo VI's heavy use of eunuchs has probably had some contribution to the verdicts passed on him; Karlin-Hayter noted the tendency to dismiss Leo 'as a supine and feeble sovereign who left government to a series of deplorable favorites, devoting himself exclusively to wife-trouble and impractical theorizing'.<sup>55</sup> Runciman's judgement of Leo as an apathetic statesman springs to mind. Hopkins's warning is enough to prevent the conclusion that Leo's use of eunuchs suggests he was a weak ruler. It is worth noting that although Leo VI had a much broader interest in eunuchs and a wider selection working for him in comparison to his father it could be argued that the one eunuch whom Basil did favour, Baanes, had far greater official authority than Samonas ever did.<sup>56</sup> The general discrepancy between Basil and Leo regarding eunuchs stands good though. Perhaps this can be explained by their differing origins. Basil was of an obscure provincial background whilst Leo was born into palace life and grew up in the society of eunuchs. Another factor worth considering is Leo's non-campaigning role. He was essentially a city-based ruler, and his sedentary court-centred lifestyle

<sup>54</sup> *Novel* 26, Noailles and Dain, *Les nouvelles*, 100-105.

<sup>55</sup> Karlin-Hayter, 'Military Affairs', 20.

<sup>56</sup> Baanes attained the dignity of *patrikios*, held the posts of *praeipositos* and *sakellarios*, and represented Basil at the council of 869-870 and in Constantinople during the emperor's absence whilst he was on campaign in 878: see R. Guiland, 'Contribution à la prosopographie de l'empire byzantin. Les patrices sous les règnes de Basil Ier (867-886) et de Léon VI (886-912)', *BZ*, 63 (1970), 300-317, esp. 301, repr. *Titres et fonctions de l'empire byzantin* (London, 1976), XI, and 'Les cunuques', 221.

no doubt lent itself to the development of close relationships with court and city personnel; Leo simply had the time and opportunity to develop a special relationship with his eunuchs. It is surely no accident that the reigns of those emperors and empresses who did not go on campaign, such as Arcadius, Theodosius II and Eirene, are particularly famed for the role that eunuchs played within them.<sup>57</sup> It may also be suspected that the more Leo was thwarted in his desire to have a son the more he sympathised with the childlessness of eunuchs.

For Hopkins one of the key functions of the eunuchs employed by emperors, whether perceived or not, was to curtail the force of the aristocrats.<sup>58</sup> He states that 'any exercise of power by non-aristocrats limited the power of aristocrats' and that this 'exercise of power by eunuchs limited the power of centrifugal forces in the state'.<sup>59</sup> Although his conclusions are based mainly on a consideration of eunuchs in the early Byzantine empire they still have relevance for Byzantium of the ninth and tenth centuries. At this time eunuchs still maintained their significant role in the imperial administration and it is agreed that in the course of the tenth century a dangerous centrifugal threat to the empire emerges in the shape of the élite provincial families of Asia Minor, who were encroaching on the village communities which were so vital for the survival of the empire; they also began to set their sights on the throne.<sup>60</sup> The key families that constituted this economic and political threat were based on the eastern fringes of the empire, families such as the Phokades, Maleinoi, Skleroi, Argyroi, Kourkouai, Tzimiskai and Doukai.<sup>61</sup> Amongst these families several were already prominent by the reign of Leo VI, and Angold has noted that Leo was the first emperor who had to deal with these families that were to cause such problems for the empire later in the tenth century.<sup>62</sup> How Leo interacted with these rising families, and whether his use of eunuchs was connected in any way with checking them shall be the focus of the rest of this chapter.

As noted several of these family names are familiar from Leo's time, some featuring more prominently than others. The names

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<sup>57</sup> See Guiland, 'Les eunuques'.

<sup>58</sup> Hopkins, *Conquerors*, 188-189.

<sup>59</sup> Hopkins, *Conquerors*, 188, 196.

<sup>60</sup> See Cheynet, *Contestations*; R. Morris, 'The Powerful and the Poor in Tenth-Century Byzantium: Law and Reality', *Past and Present*, 73 (1976), 3-27; Toynbee, *Constantine*, 145-176; Whittow, *Making*, where extensive comment is made in Chapters Nine and Ten.

<sup>61</sup> Cheynet, *Contestations*, 213; Morris, 'Powerful and Poor', 23; Whittow, *Making*.

<sup>62</sup> M. Angold, 'Introduction', *The Byzantine Aristocracy IX to XIII Centuries*, ed. M. Angold (Oxford, 1984), 2.

Kourkouas, Skleros and Maleinos surface briefly. In March 886 John Kourkouas headed a plot to overthrow Basil I; in 894-5 Niketas Skleros was dispatched on a mission to win the military assistance of the Magyars; in 912 Leo's funeral would be witnessed by Michael Maleinos.<sup>63</sup> The names that figure especially large in the surviving records of Leo's reign are Phokas, Doukas and Argyros; this provides sufficient depth for an examination of the members of these families and their relationship with the emperor. The origins of the Phokades are obscure, but they came to be based in Cappadocia.<sup>64</sup> The key figure of the family in Leo's reign is the first known, Nikephoros Phokas, the grandfather of the emperor of the same name who reigned from 963 to 969. Nikephoros began his military career under Basil I, and by the end of the latter's reign he was on campaign in southern Italy. Leo's *Taktika* refers to Nikephoros's activities there; when the emperor notes that it is preferable to use incentives when dealing with a besieged people he cites the case of 'our *strategos* Nikephoros' when he was sent against the Lombards by 'our imperi-ality'.<sup>65</sup> Dagron conjectures that this campaign occurred in 885 when 'Basil I règne encore, avec Léon comme empereur associé'<sup>66</sup>, but this is surely wrong on two counts. Not only was Leo still in prison in 885 he explicitly takes the credit for sending Nikephoros against the Lombards. The incident should be located after the release of Leo in July 886 and before the rebellion of Agion in 888, for Nikephoros was no longer present in Italy then. Nikephoros probably returned to the east to fill the position of domestic of the schools; he is found in this post after the disappearance of the previous incumbent Andrew<sup>67</sup>, who is last heard of at the trial of Photios in 887. When domestic of the schools Nikephoros was active on the eastern frontier; both Leo's *Taktika* and Nikephoros Phokas's *De Velitatione* refer to a campaign of Nikephoros against the Arabs when he was apparently holding this post.<sup>68</sup> When the Arabs launched an assault

<sup>63</sup> L. Petit, 'Vie de saint Michel Maléinos', *ROC*, series 1, 7 (1902), 543-568, esp. 552. 12-17. Herlong, *Social Mobility*, 160, conjectures that the admiral Eustathios (who served Leo in 895, 902 and 904) was of the Maleinos family, being the grandfather of Michael Maleinos.

<sup>64</sup> For the Phokades see J.-C. Cheynet, *Les Phocas*, appendix in Dagron and Mihăescu, *Traité sur la guérilla*, 289-315; Cheynet, *Contestations*, 213-214.

<sup>65</sup> *PG* 107, 896, 15. 38.

<sup>66</sup> Dagron and Mihăescu, *Traité sur la guérilla*, 166.

<sup>67</sup> *GMC*, 854.

<sup>68</sup> *PG* 107, 800, 11. 25, 933, 17. 83; Dagron and Mihăescu, *Traité sur la guérilla*, 112-115. For analysis and dating of the campaign recorded by Leo VI and Nikephoros II Phokas see Dagron and Mihăescu, *Traité sur la guérilla*, 166-169, and Cheynet, *Les Phocas*, 293-295. Cheynet dates the campaign to 886-896, but this can be modified to 887-895, for Andrew was still alive in 887.

over the frontier into the Anatolikon theme Nikephoros responded with a counter-offensive against Arab territory. He attacked the areas around Adana and Tarsus and managed to return home unscathed bearing booty and prisoners of war. The advent of war with Bulgaria called for Nikephoros's services closer to Constantinople; in 895 he led the land forces in the major mobilisation against Symeon. Nikephoros may even have engaged in battle in Bulgaria for Leo's *Taktika* records a weapon that he devised for use against the Bulgarian cavalry, a spike that could be planted in the ground.<sup>69</sup> After the withdrawal from Bulgaria in 895 Nikephoros's career came to a halt. Some chroniclers record that he died, asserting that it was this fact that encouraged Symeon to attack the empire again in 896, when a new domestic of the schools, Leo Katakalon, was sent out to face the Bulgars.<sup>70</sup> However the chronicler Theophanes Continuatus has a different story to tell.<sup>71</sup> He relates that Leo VI and Nikephoros Phokas were on very friendly terms and Stylianos hoped to benefit from this situation by marrying his daughter to the popular Phokas. Nikephoros rejected the proposal though, and in revenge Zaoutzes had charges contrived against him that resulted in his dismissal from office.<sup>72</sup> Theophanes Continuatus then also relates that Nikephoros's career revived after his fall; he became *strategos* of the Thrakesion theme, accomplished brave and notable deeds in war, set up many trophies over the Agarenes and other nations and died at a good old age.<sup>73</sup> For Cheynet these added career details do not ring true. Whilst he concedes that the story of Phokas's removal from office is not unlikely he finds the account of his subsequent career unbelievable; for Nikephoros to become a plain *strategos* after having been domestic of the schools 'serait contraire à toute la tradition administrative byzantine', and surely Leo VI 'qui avait pour lui [Phokas] tant d'estime' would have reappointed him as chief of the army after the defeat at Bulgarophygon in 896.<sup>74</sup> Dagrón however rejected the theory originally proposed by Grégoire that Nikephoros died between 894-896 in disgrace, but perhaps he was encouraged in this by the belief that the famed eastern campaign (which Cheynet has dated so persuasively to the time when Phokas was domestic of the schools)

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<sup>69</sup> PG 107, 800, 11. 26.

<sup>70</sup> GMC, 855.

<sup>71</sup> TC, 359.

<sup>72</sup> In Chapter Four above I suggested that the real reason for Phokas's fall was the withdrawal from Bulgaria.

<sup>73</sup> TC, 359-360.

<sup>74</sup> Cheynet, *Les Phocas*, 295.

may have occurred after the Bulgarian war.<sup>75</sup> Theophanes Continuatus may simply have made an error, misplacing an earlier stage of Phokas's career. Alternatively he may have deliberately wished to rescue his hero from his final disgrace by alleging that his career did resume again, and in a glorious fashion; certainly his attempt to attribute Phokas's fall to the machinations of Stylianos Zaoutzes is suspect. Despite this fog that surrounds the final stages of Phokas's life it is clear that the emperor's relationship with the soldier was by and large good, a point that Cheynet has already highlighted. He observes that 'La vrai force de Nicéphore fut l'amitié indéfectible de Léon VI qui le considérait comme «son général»'.<sup>76</sup> That friendship existed between Leo and Nikephoros is indeed the impression created by the testimony of the sources. Theophanes Continuatus attests to it, which on its own may not seem that significant, but the fact that Leo VI himself in his *Taktika* praises the achievements of Phokas in all the theatres of war where he was active adds corroboration. That Leo very rarely refers to historical incidents in his military manual makes these instances all the more striking; Phokas emerges hero-like. Given the amity between the two men Cheynet conjectured that the relationship dated to Leo's youth, and that Phokas was one of his allies at the time of his imprisonment in 883.<sup>77</sup> The friendship is further conveyed by what is known of Leo's relationship with the sons of Nikephoros; Bardas Phokas is recorded as being a particularly devoted friend of the emperor, whilst Leo Phokas seems to have attained the post of *strategos* of the Anatolikon theme during the reign.<sup>78</sup> It is apparent that both Leo VI and Constantine VII relied on the military talents of the Phokades 'sans crainte'<sup>79</sup>, and in general the emperors of the Macedonian dynasty who did not command their armies in person had 'une prédilection évidente pour les Phocas', and the Phokades themselves showed a 'remarquable fidélité' to the dynasty.<sup>80</sup> As Dagron observed it was Leo VI who was the initiator of this special relationship with the family; he was the 'grand protecteur' of the Phokades.<sup>81</sup> Thus as far as this family of the eastern provincial élite goes the emperor had personal ties of friendship with it, which

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<sup>75</sup> Dagron and Mihăescu, *Traité sur la guérilla*, 168-169. For Grégoire's view see his 'Carrière'.

<sup>76</sup> Cheynet, *Les Phocas*, 296.

<sup>77</sup> Cheynet, *Les Phocas*, 296.

<sup>78</sup> For Nikephoros's sons see *TC*, 360. For the conjecture that Leo Phokas was *strategos* of the Anatolikon theme in c. 900 see Cheynet, *Les Phocas*, 297, 313.

<sup>79</sup> Cheynet, *Contestations*, 264.

<sup>80</sup> Cheynet, *Contestations*, 321.

<sup>81</sup> Dagron and Mihăescu, *Traité sur la guérilla*, 9, 175.

do not seem to have been affected by the apparent fall of Nikephoros in 895-896.

In the cases of the Doukai and the Argyroi however there is evidence of tension between the emperor and these families. Before considering the nature of this conflict the origins of these families and the careers of their members will be detailed.<sup>82</sup> The family name of Doukas derived from the military rank of *dux*, and appeared for the first time c. 855.<sup>83</sup> It was suspected that the family was of Armenian origin but Polemis insisted that it was Greek.<sup>84</sup> It is important to note that the famed Doukas family that appeared under Basil II and acquired an imperial role in the eleventh and twelfth centuries is not the same as that which was prominent in the early tenth century, though the later Doukai did connect themselves with the earlier family.<sup>85</sup> In Leo's reign the Doukai were active in the military sphere on the eastern frontier, but it is unclear if they were based on property in this region<sup>86</sup> or indeed if they had any extensive estates at all.<sup>87</sup> Like the earliest known Doukas the first Argyros appeared in the mid-ninth century during the reign of Michael III, the name meaning 'celui qui brille, sous-entendu comme l'argent, par sa beauté, sa noblesse ou quelque autre trait de race ou de valeur personnelle'; however which nuance made it applicable to the family is unknown.<sup>88</sup> Unlike the Doukai the Argyroi can definitely be traced to their place of origin, the region of Cappadocia.<sup>89</sup> Again it cannot be proved that they possessed great estates, though the fact that the first known member of the family, Leo<sup>90</sup>, built a monastery in Charsianon dedicated to St Elizabeth perhaps indicates that they did have significant property in this area.<sup>91</sup>

The two major members of these families who served Leo VI were Andronikos Doukas and Eustathios Argyros, who both came to prominence in the first decade of the tenth century. Eustathios receives a particularly glowing press on his debut in the chronicle of

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<sup>82</sup> For the Doukai see D. I. Polemis, *The Doukai. A Contribution to Byzantine Prosopography* (London, 1968); Cheynet, *Contestations*, 216-217. For the Argyroi see J.-F. Vannier, *Familles byzantines: les Argyroi (IXe-XIIe siècles)* (Paris, 1975); Cheynet, *Contestations*, 215-216.

<sup>83</sup> Polemis, *Doukai*, 4.

<sup>84</sup> Polemis, *Doukai*, 5-6.

<sup>85</sup> Polemis, *Doukai*, 6; Cheynet, *Contestations*, 216-217.

<sup>86</sup> Cheynet, *Contestations*, 216.

<sup>87</sup> Polemis, *Doukai*, 6-7.

<sup>88</sup> Vannier, *Argyroi*, 15.

<sup>89</sup> Vannier, *Argyroi*, 16.

<sup>90</sup> For this Argyros see Vannier, *Argyroi*, 19-20.

<sup>91</sup> Vannier, *Argyroi*, 16.

Theophanes Continuatus, whose pronounced favouritism for Nikephoros Phokas has already been witnessed.<sup>92</sup> The chronicler reports that the emperor had as *hypostrategos* of the Anatolikon theme Eustathios the *patrikios*, who was of the excellent and good family of the Argyroi, and that he campaigned against the Ishmaelites who were terrified even at the mention of his name. Eustathios is credited with several specific virtues, those of strength, might, intelligence, courage, sensibility, temperance and justice, these last four being the virtues by which an emperor's actions were characterised in a *basilikos logos*. Andronikos Doukas is mentioned in conjunction with Eustathios but receives no such fulsome description, though it is evident that the chronicler is equally sympathetic to this general. Of the military endeavours of Andronikos little is actually known; it is Tabari who tells of his successful assault on Maras in November 904.<sup>93</sup> The Byzantine sources do not even indicate what post Andronikos held; it is the Arabs who suggest that he was in fact domestic of the schools by 906.<sup>94</sup> Ironically Andronikos was famous amongst the Byzantines not for the details of his military career but because he defected to Bagdad. The chronicles relate that the eunuch Samonas nursed a grudge against Andronikos<sup>95</sup> apparently ever since the eunuch had been stalled in his attempt to flee the Byzantine empire and return to his country of origin.<sup>96</sup> The story goes that in 904 Samonas made an excuse to visit his monastery of Speira in Damatry, but taking money and horses he began his attempted flight. In the course of the journey he nobbled the horses of the public post by ham-stringing them in order to delay any pursuit. Leo VI dispatched Basil Kamateros the hetaireiarch and George Krenites after Samonas, but it was the *drungarios* Nikephoros Kaminas<sup>97</sup> who was responsible for stopping the eunuch from crossing the Halys. Having failed to win the collusion of Nikephoros with bribes Samonas sought refuge at a nearby holy site, that of the cross at Siricha, which he maintained had been the object of his journey all along.<sup>98</sup> It was the son of Andronikos, Constantine Doukas, who finally apprehended Samonas at Siricha and brought

<sup>92</sup> *TC*, 368-369.

<sup>93</sup> Vasiliev, *Byzance et les Arabes*, II, 1, 181.

<sup>94</sup> Polemis, *Doukai*, 20-21; Cheynet, *Les Phocas*, 312.

<sup>95</sup> *GMC*, 866.

<sup>96</sup> For the episode of Samonas's flight see *GMC*, 863-864.

<sup>97</sup> The chronicles disagree over the name of the *drungarios*. He is called Kallonas by *TC*, 369, and Kamitzes by *Ps. Sym.*, 708.

<sup>98</sup> On the shrine of the cross at Siricha see H. Ahrweiler, 'Sur la localisation du couvent du Timios Stauros de Syricha', *Geographica byzantina*, ed. H. Ahrweiler (Paris, 1981), 9-15.

him back to Constantinople, where the flight was to be the subject of an enquiry by the senate. However the emperor, due to his attachment to the eunuch, prevailed upon Constantine Doukas to maintain before the inquiry that Samonas had not been fleeing to Syria, but had indeed had Siricha as his goal. But when Constantine was asked to give his response on the oath 'By God and the emperor's head' he could not lie. Samonas was duly confined to the house of Bardas for four months, before returning to the society and favour of the emperor. Thus Samonas's grudge was born, and in 906<sup>99</sup> his plans to undermine Andronikos and his family began to take effect. The chronicles relate<sup>100</sup> that a joint land and sea force was prepared against an Arab attack, to be headed by Himerios and Andronikos Doukas. When the fleet was gathered Andronikos received orders to board the ship, but due to the machinations of Samonas he was very reluctant to do so; the eunuch had prevailed upon a friend of Andronikos to write to him with the warning that Himerios had been ordered by the emperor on the advice of Samonas to seize and blind him when he went aboard. As Himerios continually urged Andronikos to come onto his ship he feared the worst and refused to comply, leaving the *drungarios* of the fleet to face the enemy alone. Himerios managed to secure victory though on 6 October, and when Andronikos heard this in despair he fled to the fortress of Kabala with his relatives and slaves, and occupied it. Doukas and his entourage remained here for six months<sup>101</sup>, during which time Leo sent out Gregory Iberitzes the domestic of the schools (and an in-law of the Doukai<sup>102</sup>) to win Andronikos over. However Andronikos, hearing that the patriarch Nikolaos had been dethroned and exiled, sought safe passage from the Arabs who came to his aid and then escorted him over the border, first to Tarsus then on to Bagdad.<sup>103</sup> Samonas could not rest yet, for the emperor wanted to get Andronikos back, and hit upon the idea of sending him a chrysobull concealed in a candle guaranteeing him a safe return to the empire. Samonas

<sup>99</sup> The question of the date of Andronikos's flight and Himerios's naval victory has been much debated. A strong case for 906 is made by Polemis, *Doukai*, 17-18, who follows the chronology indicated by the Byzantine and the Arab chronicles not that of the *Life of Euthymios*. See also Grumel, 'Notes chronologiques'; M. Canard, 'Deux épisodes des relations diplomatiques arabo-byzantines au X<sup>e</sup> siècle', *Bulletin d'Études Orientales*, 13 (1949-50), 51-69, esp. 60-61, n. 4.

<sup>100</sup> For the chroniclers's account of Andronikos's desertion and Constantine's return see *GMC*, 866-868; *TC*, 371-374.

<sup>101</sup> This detail is supplied by *VE*, 69, 5-7.

<sup>102</sup> Polemis, *Doukai*, 24, considers that Gregory Iberitzes was the father-in-law of Constantine Doukas.

<sup>103</sup> For Andronikos and the Arabs see Vasiliev, *Byzance et les Arabes*, II, 1, 187-191.

scuppered this plan by ensuring that the document fell into the wrong hands, those of the vizier. Andronikos found himself imprisoned in Bagdad, and was forced to convert to Islam. He seems to have died soon afterwards.<sup>104</sup> As for the career of his son Constantine Doukas, he first appears as the escort of Samonas from Siricha to Constantinople. This has prompted the suggestion that he must have had a post in a region that encompassed Siricha in 904.<sup>105</sup> For telling the truth about Samonas's flight he earned the anger of the emperor, and is next found involved in his father's occupation of Kabala and desertion to the Arabs. Unlike Andronikos he managed to escape from Bagdad and return to Constantinople in c. 908<sup>106</sup> where he was enthusiastically received by Leo in the Chrysotriklinos, though the emperor also warned him against trying to become emperor himself. The restoration of the emperor's favour is reflected by the restart of Constantine's career, for he became *strategos* of Charsianon in c. 909<sup>107</sup>, and by 913 he was domestic of the schools.<sup>108</sup> It was in 913 that he endeavoured to take imperial power on the death of Alexander I but the regency council thwarted his attempt, and Constantine and his allies were brutally crushed, leading to the extinguishing of the fortunes and very existence of the Doukas family.<sup>109</sup>

Concerning the Argyroi, the main member of the family who played a role in the reign of Leo VI was Eustathios Argyros. It is vital to realise that this Eustathios is not the same man as the Eustathios who was *drungarios* of the fleet in 895, 902 and 904.<sup>110</sup> Eustathios Argyros appears under Leo in the first decade of the tenth century, though his career may date back to the reign of Michael III.<sup>111</sup> Under Leo he had a military role in the east, winning victories over the Arabs. Theophanes Continuatus identifies his post as that of *hyprostrategos* of the Anatolics, which Vannier interpreted as meaning that he was simply the *strategos* of the Anatolikon theme.<sup>112</sup> Whilst in

<sup>104</sup> Polemis, *Doukai*, 19. It seems that Constantine Doukas only returned to Constantinople after his father's death, and Constantine was back in the city c. 908.

<sup>105</sup> Ahrweiler, 'Timios Stauros', 11, n. 1. Polemis deduced nothing about Constantine's career from his involvement in the apprehension of Samonas.

<sup>106</sup> For this date see Polemis, *Doukai*, 22.

<sup>107</sup> *DAI*, I, 240. 152-153. For the dating see *DAI*, II, 191.

<sup>108</sup> *GMC*, 874. See Cheynet, *Les Phocas*, 312.

<sup>109</sup> For the events of 913 see Polemis, *Doukai*, 23-24.

<sup>110</sup> See Vannier, *Argyroi*, 23-24.

<sup>111</sup> Vannier, *Argyroi*, 21.

<sup>112</sup> Vannier, *Argyroi*, 22. See also Cheynet, *Les Phocas*, 313. However Ahrweiler, 'Timios Stauros', 11, n. 1, seems to suggest that Eustathios was *strategos* of Charsianon from at least 904.

this post it seems that Eustathios fell into disgrace and was exiled, for it is related in the *De Administrando Imperio* that he was recalled and made *strategos* of Charsianon.<sup>113</sup> This fall has been linked with the episode of the rebellion and flight of Andronikos Doukas, and his restoration has been dated to 907-908.<sup>114</sup> Whilst he was *strategos* of Charsianon Eustathios had dealings with certain Armenian refugees at Melitene, namely Melias, the trio of brothers Baasakios, Krikorikios and Pazounes, and also a certain Ismael.<sup>115</sup> These refugees appealed through the intermediary of Eustathios and also directly to the emperor to be allowed safe-passage into the Byzantine empire, where they would serve the emperor along the eastern frontier. Eustathios's stint as the *strategos* of Charsianon was not of long duration, for he was soon replaced in c. 909 by the returned Constantine Doukas; he moved on to a post in Constantinople, that of *drungarios* of the watch, which involved ensuring the security of the emperor.<sup>116</sup> However in c. 910<sup>117</sup> Eustathios came under suspicion and the emperor ordered him to return to his home in Charsianon; on the road to Aran he took poison from 'his man' and died, and was buried at Spynin on the summit of Aran.<sup>118</sup> Like Nikephoros Phokas and Andronikos Doukas Eustathios Argyros had sons who also served Leo VI. These were Leo and Pothos who were *manglabites* (bodyguards) of the emperor; they were responsible for exhuming their father and burying him in their ancestral monastery of St Elizabeth.<sup>119</sup> Leo Argyros seems to have become *strategos* of the theme of Sebasteia in 911, acquiring the dignity of *protospatharios*.<sup>120</sup> His career continued under Zoe Karbonopsina and also Romanos Lekapenos, and he probably became domestic of the schools in 922 for a brief period.<sup>121</sup> Pothos's career also continued; he was domestic of the schools in 921, and in 958 he seems to have fought the Hungarians whilst holding the office of the domestic of the excubitors.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> *DAI*, I, 238. 136-138.

<sup>114</sup> Vannier, *Argyroi*, 22; *DAI*, II, 191.

<sup>115</sup> See *DAI*, I, 238. 136-146.

<sup>116</sup> Vannier, *Argyroi*, 23. Vannier asserts that Eustathios also became *magistros*, but this detail is only recorded by the later chronicler Skylitzes: see *Scylitzae*, 188. 24.

<sup>117</sup> This date was proposed by Vannier, *Argyroi*, 25.

<sup>118</sup> Of the tenth-century chroniclers only *TC*, 374, has these details. Vannier, *Argyroi*, 23, n.9, notes that Aran and Spynin are on the route which goes from Melitene to Charsianon via Sebasteia.

<sup>119</sup> *TC*, 374.

<sup>120</sup> Vannier, *Argyroi*, 25.

<sup>121</sup> Vannier, *Argyroi*, 25-26.

<sup>122</sup> Vannier, *Argyroi*, 27-28.

An interpretation of these many complex details concerning the careers of the Doukai and the Argyroi has been propounded by Jenkins. He argues that these two families formed a plot to remove Leo VI from power, and were only thwarted by the skills of the emperor's chief intelligence agent, the eunuch Samonas.<sup>123</sup> His starting point for the development of this theory was a consideration of the flight of Samonas in 904; he felt that there was no good reason for this event, and found the lenient attitude of Leo towards the recaptured Samonas 'inexplicable'.<sup>124</sup> Jenkins provided an explanation by devising the theory of the plot centred on Andronikos Doukas and Eustathios Argyros. He baldly asserts that 'Andronicus was to have the crown. Saracen naval support, indispensable for the capture of Constantinople, was to be purchased by maritime concessions abandoned to the Arabs by the treachery of the lord admiral Eustace'.<sup>125</sup> Also involved in the conspiracy was the patriarch Nikolaos. Jenkins traces the plot back to 902 when Eustathios was accused of treachery for letting Taormina fall to the African Arabs; it was the influence of Nikolaos over Leo that ensured that Eustathios was not executed, but only forced to take up a monastic life in the Studite monastery.<sup>126</sup> The next step in the plot was the attempted assassination of the emperor in the church of St Mokios on the feast of Mid-Pentecost in 903, which the *Life of Euthymios* asserts that Leo came to suspect Nikolaos of.<sup>127</sup> In addition the Arab navy was allowed to make further inroads, taking Lemnos in the same year. Then comes the moment of Samonas's flight in the spring of 904. Jenkins is of the opinion that this eunuch's functions were 'closely connected with the work of the secret police'<sup>128</sup>, and that his attempt to escape to the Arab empire was a sham, a cover for his real purpose to acquire information about the details of the collusion between the Arabs and the so-called military aristocracy.<sup>129</sup> However Samonas's mission failed, thanks to the intervention of the *drungarios* Nikephoros who stopped him crossing the Halys. Due to Constantine Doukas's testimony that Samonas had indeed been fleeing the country the emperor, who was in the know about the eunuch's real intentions, was forced to punish his agent. The mildness and short duration of the punishment are

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<sup>123</sup> Jenkins, 'Flight'.

<sup>124</sup> Jenkins, 'Flight', 218.

<sup>125</sup> Jenkins, 'Flight', 224.

<sup>126</sup> See *GMC*, 860-861.

<sup>127</sup> *VE*, 75. 2-6.

<sup>128</sup> Jenkins, 'Flight', 222.

<sup>129</sup> Jenkins, 'Flight', 226-227.

taken as a sign of Leo's awareness of the truth. It was after the failure of the mission that the conspirators made their major move. The Arab allies advanced to Constantinople, and the admiral Eustathios offered no resistance. He was removed from his command and demoted to the post of *drungarios* of the watch. Then Himerios was sent out against the enemy, and Andronikos Doukas was meant to join forces with him, but was in a dilemma; how could he make his move on Constantinople when there now existed a Byzantine admiral of 'unquestioned loyalty to the crown'?<sup>130</sup> Andronikos's course of action was decided upon when he received the letter that Samonas was responsible for. He dashed away and took refuge in Kabala, and then defected over the border in 905. So the immediate threat of the conspiracy was overcome but its members still remained to be dealt with. A secret letter of conciliation was sent to Andronikos, and was allowed to fall into the wrong hands, thus discrediting him at Bagdad; Eustathios was allowed to return from exile and become *strategos* of Charsianon, but when he made a break for Melitene he was poisoned by agents of Samonas; and finally the patriarch Nikolaos was deposed.<sup>131</sup> Thus it was that Samonas 'pitted his wits against the most powerful forces in the empire...and...beat them all'.<sup>132</sup>

Here then is a blatant case of a eunuch limiting the power of 'aristocrats', but it is to be doubted that Hopkins ever visualised such a direct practice of his theory. However it is clear even from the above summary of Jenkins's reading of events between the emperor and certain military officials that his argument is flawed; indeed Polemis, Karlin-Hayter and Rydén have already rejected his interpretation. Polemis's objections<sup>133</sup> will be returned to below, but Karlin-Hayter remarks that Jenkins's theory is 'too bold' for her and does not seem to be 'sufficiently guaranteed by the sources'<sup>134</sup>, whilst Rydén states that it 'rests on too many assumptions to be convincing'.<sup>135</sup> Ignoring the fact that it does owe more to imagination than to the sources several points of contention can be noted. First Jenkins identified the admiral Eustathios with Eustathios Argyros. Then he equated Himerios's pursuit of the Arabs in 904 with his victory of 906, thus also placing Andronikos's flight to Kabala in 904, although it is known that Andronikos was still fighting for the Byzantine empire

<sup>130</sup> Jenkins, 'Flight', 229.

<sup>131</sup> For the fates of the conspirators see Jenkins, 'Flight', 232-233.

<sup>132</sup> Jenkins, 'Flight', 233.

<sup>133</sup> Polemis, *Doukai*, 6-7.

<sup>134</sup> Karlin-Hayter, *VE, Commentary*, 177.

<sup>135</sup> Rydén, 'Portrait', 102, n. 12.

in late 904. Nikolaos's role in both the trial of the admiral Eustathios and the flight of Andronikos can be understood in much simpler terms; he was not a co-conspirator of these men but a source of appeal for them since he was the head of the Byzantine church, a church that 'had a different philosophy of punishment' than the secular authorities, for it took a more lenient line.<sup>136</sup> When Nikolaos persuaded the emperor not to execute Eustathios in 902 he was merely fulfilling his Christian duty, and no doubt in 906-907 Nikolaos was in correspondence with Andronikos, but most likely not as a conspirator but rather as a saviour guaranteeing him protection if he was brought to trial before the emperor.<sup>137</sup> Regarding the St Mokios attack on Leo there is no good reason to link it to a major conspiracy as visualised by Jenkins. Not only was Leo's brother Alexander a more likely suspect but the attempted assassin was apprehended and revealed nothing of any other conspirators; the attack in 903 seems to be an instance of an individual working alone for some reason that cannot now be known.<sup>138</sup> A further point against Jenkins is that Leo's attitude to Samonas after he had attempted to return to his own country is not 'inexplicable' at all, but parallels the emperor's attitudes in similar cases; figures whom Leo has punished but then soon restored to favour are not rare, examples being Leo Katakalon, Euthymios, the admiral Eustathios, Eustathios Argyros and the eunuch Constantine. There are also indications that Leo would have been glad for Andronikos Doukas to return to the fold. The instance of Samonas is not unique, or even peculiar; judging by Leo's record a house arrest of four months did constitute a punishment. As for the perception that Samonas was a key figure in Leo's secret police, this has been too readily swallowed, based mainly as it is on an episode in a fictional saint's life of the mid-tenth century which is hardly concerned with the Samonas of historical reality but just wanted a villain to oppose to its hero. Jenkins's conspiracy theory then can easily be undermined; however it does raise serious questions that need to be addressed.

First the question of why Samonas fled remains. Why would this eunuch who had sprung to prominence, wealth and favour wish to abandon such a life? It can appear to be a puzzle; Karlin-Hayter calls it a 'strange business'<sup>139</sup> and Jenkins noted that 'there is no suggestion

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<sup>136</sup> See R. J. Macrides, 'Killing, Asylum and the Law in Byzantium', *Speculum*, 63 (1988), 509-538, esp. 509.

<sup>137</sup> Polemis, *Doukai*, 20, conjectures that 'Andronikos was relying upon the mediation of the patriarch to obtain a pardon'.

<sup>138</sup> For the attack see *GMC*, 861; *VE*, 67. 3-14.

<sup>139</sup> Karlin-Hayter, *VE, Commentary*, 177.

of motive to induce the *cubicularius* to desert'.<sup>140</sup> However the alleged motive is clear; Samonas simply wanted to return to his own people. There seems to be no reason to doubt that this was the real motive. It must not be forgotten that Samonas was an Arab, and that he still had family in his native country. His father seems to have lived in Melitene, and was obviously a man of some significance for he came on embassy to Leo VI in 908, when Samonas is alleged to have told him that he would return to him.<sup>141</sup> It is vital to remember also that Samonas only began his association with the emperor in 900; before that he had been a servant in the house of Stylianos Zaoutzes. It was his new life that gave him the opportunity to escape. The fact that his flight probably occurred in the same year as the Arab advance on Constantinople and the sack of Thessalonike may have significance too; Samonas may have thought it was meet to desert because he feared anti-Arab sentiment within Byzantium.

Questions also remain over the relationship of the emperor with the Argyroi and the Doukai; the evidence pointing to conflict needs to be considered more deeply in order to establish if there was a serious threat to Leo's rule. Having denied that the fall of Taormina in 902, the attack in the church of St Mokios in 903 and the naval campaign of Leo the Tripolite in 904 (and the other naval incursions of the Arabs) were all part of a major plot of the Doukai and Argyroi, this leaves the non-cooperation and flight of Andronikos Doukas in 906 to be explained. Most Byzantinists who have commented on the incident consider that it does point to a significant plot against the emperor<sup>142</sup>, but the fact is that this conclusion<sup>143</sup> is based on flimsy evidence. The indications in the *Life of Euthymios* that Andronikos had imperial ambitions are questionable, for that text is motivated by the desire to blacken the patriarch Nikolaos. In reality, as Polemis has pointed out, the actions of Andronikos tell a different story.<sup>143</sup> Polemis noted that 'the purely defensive character of his [Andronikos's] moves was obvious and there appears to be no trace of any attempt aiming at the throne'; he believes that the machinations of Samonas do lie at the root of his flight to Kabala.<sup>144</sup> Kabala itself was hardly a base from which to launch a bid for imperial power, and Andronikos does not seem to have had a significant number of allies.

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<sup>140</sup> Jenkins, 'Flight', 218.

<sup>141</sup> *GMC*, 868.

<sup>142</sup> For instance Vasiliev, *Byzance et les Arabes*, II, 1, 189; Canard, 'Deux épisodes', 56-57; Jenkins, 'Flight'; P. Karlin-Hayter, 'The Revolt of Andronicus Ducas', *BSI*, 27 (1966), 23-25, esp. 25, repr. *Studies in*, VI.

<sup>143</sup> See Polemis, *Doukai*, 18-20.

<sup>144</sup> Polemis, *Doukai*, 19.

Polemis argues that 'an ambitious rebel with a defined objective... would undoubtedly have turned elsewhere instead of wasting time by remaining inactive in a remote fortress in Anatolia'.<sup>145</sup> As for the defection over the border, that 'must be seen simply as the desperate move of a betrayed general with no carefully laid plans or wide support'.<sup>146</sup> The events of 906-907 have tended then to have been interpreted as having a meaning that the evidence does not bear out. The revenge of Samonas was the crucial factor, not that Andronikos was plotting against the emperor.<sup>147</sup>

Ultimately Andronikos's flight is symptomatic of the fact that there was tension between the officials of the emperor, not that there was a plot against the emperor himself. Andronikos may not have feared the influence of Samonas alone, but also that of Himerios, another close official of the emperor. The factor of rivalry for the friendship of the emperor needs to be appreciated.<sup>148</sup> It was news of Himerios's victory that had spurred Andronikos to take refuge at Kabala; not only had Doukas disobeyed the orders of the emperor, he had missed the chance of reaping the rewards of military success which now fell to another individual. Andronikos was to seek the aid of the patriarch as his defender and reconciler with the emperor, but Nikolaos fell and Andronikos went over the border. The actions of the emperor during these events are also telling; his attitude towards Doukas does not indicate that he believed him to be a traitor. Leo's desire to be reconciled with Andronikos is well attested, and the sending of Gregory Iberitzes, an in-law of Doukas, to Kabala further suggests a wish to restore Andronikos to the fold. Once Andronikos defected however matters became more complicated; he could now pose a real threat to the Byzantine empire, just as Leo the Tripolite and Damianos did. In this context it is believable that the secret message to Doukas was intended to undermine his position with the Arabs as Jenkins suggested. Leo's *Taktika* supports this notion, for it reveals how deserters can be discredited by sending letters to them urging them to some treachery; they will make themselves suspect, either by concealing the letters from those to whom they have deserted or by letting them see them.<sup>149</sup>

<sup>145</sup> Polemis, *Doukai*, 19-20.

<sup>146</sup> Polemis, *Doukai*, 20.

<sup>147</sup> A comparable case is that of Tatzatios who deserted to the Arabs in 782 because of the poor relationship between him and the eunuch Staurakios, a favourite of the empress Eirene: see *Theophanis*, I, 456.

<sup>148</sup> Cheynet, *Contestations*, 322, within the context of the problems of the tenth century particularly stresses the factor of the rivalry between different families.

<sup>149</sup> *PG* 107, 1021, 20. 29.

Concerning the case of Constantine Doukas's play for power in 913, although this lies beyond Leo's reign it is worth noting that it too does not bespeak any great longing among the Doukai for the throne, but arose out of a very particular set of circumstances; essentially it was initiated not by Doukas himself but by the patriarch Nikolaos who was hasty in calling upon Constantine's help. As for Leo's prophetic warning to Constantine in 908 this does not indicate that the Doukai aspired to the throne but merely shows that the chroniclers were aware of Constantine's fate in 913.

Polemis's reading of the incidents of tension between the Doukai and the throne is surely correct, and he also rightly severs the connection of the events of 906-907 and 913 to 'those frequent tenth-century challenges to imperial authority which culminated in the far more serious revolts of Skleros and Phokas during the first years of Basileios II'.<sup>150</sup> As Cheynet has pointed out it was the key event of the assassination of Nikephoros II Phokas in 969 that inaugurated the severe struggles for imperial power.<sup>151</sup> The evident friendship that existed between the Doukai and Leo VI, as on the model of the emperor's relationship with the Phokades, should not be overshadowed by the moments of tension. Both Andronikos and his son Constantine, as well as their in-law Gregory, rose to high office under Leo; Andronikos and Gregory became domestic of the schools, as did Constantine by 913. These men played a key part in the extension and maintenance of the eastern frontier. That Leo came into conflict with Andronikos was essentially a historical accident. The emperor's attachment to him is clear from his attempts to secure his reconciliation; Leo even wrote a poem on Andronikos's desertion, just as he had done on the lamentable occasion of the fall of Thessalonike.<sup>152</sup> Although Andronikos was not to return from Bagdad his son Constantine did, and he was set back on the path of his career by the emperor.

The case of the family of the Argyroi also rewards a closer reading. There are indeed indications of tension. Eustathios Argyros suffered two known disgraces, for he was removed from his office of *hyposstrategos* of the Anatolikon theme, and later from that of *drungarios* of the watch. The first fall has been linked with Andronikos's desertion of 906-907, but there is no evidence to support this suggestion.

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<sup>150</sup> Polemis, *Doukai*, 6. See also the comments of Whittow, *Making*, 340-341, who emphasises the traditional political control of the imperial court during the ninth and early tenth centuries.

<sup>151</sup> Cheynet, *Contestations*, 328.

<sup>152</sup> Maas, 'Literarisches'.

The reason for his second disgrace is also open to conjecture; Vannier has tentatively connected it with the fall of Baasakios the kleisouriarach of Larissa, who was accused of treachery and exiled.<sup>153</sup> As for the poisoning of Eustathios there is no indication that it was carried out at the will of the emperor or Samonas; indeed the impression created is that Eustathios took his own life. Despite these indications of a turbulent career there are also signs of a good relationship between Leo VI and the Argyroi. Eustathios did hold several high offices, and his sons Leo and Pothos continued their careers under the emperor in favour. They were even allowed to rebury their father in their family monastery. To a large extent then it can be argued that the relationship between Leo VI and all three families, the Phokades, the Doukai and the Argyroi, was in general characterised by friendship.

Returning to the pairing of eunuchs and *strategoï* it can be concluded that friendship with both groups simultaneously was not impossible; Samonas may have had a grudge against the Doukai, but that appears to have been for personal reasons. Leo VI has a special relationship with both of these elements of the senatorial order, and both groups form a prominent feature of the reign. Leo depended on his eunuchs as he spent most of his life in Constantinople, and thus his generals were also crucial, as he relied on them to fight his battles. This dichotomy established by Leo VI remained good until the reign of Nikephoros II Phokas, and Cheynet notes that the decision of Basil II to return to the practice of the emperor commanding the army in person prompted certain members of the provincial élite of Asia Minor to rebel.<sup>154</sup> Thus Leo VI was responsible for the attaining of a status quo; the emperor remained at the centre of power in Constantinople where he could develop close relations with his palace staff, whilst also maintaining good relations with his generals. Essentially the marked friendship that Leo possessed with both groups was symptomatic of his style of emperorship, a style that was to last until the advent of the reign of the younger Nikephoros Phokas.

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<sup>153</sup> Vannier, *Argyroi*, 23.

<sup>154</sup> Cheynet, *Contestations*, 331.

## CHAPTER NINE

### ALEXANDER

Amongst Byzantine emperors the figure of Alexander I (brother of Leo VI) is notorious, and he has been reviled by Byzantines and Byzantinists alike. In fact the account of his reign supplied by the chroniclers has been adopted by most Byzantinists<sup>1</sup>, and Jenkins observed that 'Alexander has indeed a strong claim to being regarded as the worst man and the worst emperor ever to sit on the Byzantine throne'.<sup>2</sup> However Karlin-Hayter was not content to let such a negative image remain without investigation, and produced a study on Alexander's short reign and reputation, accounting for some of the vociferous hatred against him.<sup>3</sup> Yet in her study Karlin-Hayter deliberately omitted any investigation of the life of Alexander before he became emperor in his own right in May 912.<sup>4</sup> It is precisely this neglected period that this chapter will address, concentrating on the relationship between Alexander and Leo and the role that the former played during his brother's rule.

Alexander was the youngest son of Basil I and Eudokia Ingerine.<sup>5</sup> He was born on 23 November, either in 869 or 870.<sup>6</sup> The date of Alexander's coronation is not recorded, but he most likely acquired an imperial role on the death of his eldest brother Constantine in 879.<sup>7</sup> His name appears with those of Basil and Leo in the heading of

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<sup>1</sup> See Karlin-Hayter, 'Bad Name', 586.

<sup>2</sup> Jenkins, *Imperial Centuries*, 209.

<sup>3</sup> Karlin-Hayter, 'Bad Name'.

<sup>4</sup> Karlin-Hayter, 'Bad Name', 586.

<sup>5</sup> This was finally proved beyond doubt by Jenkins, 'Chronological Accuracy', 100.

<sup>6</sup> For this date see Jenkins, 'Chronological Accuracy', 98. Adontz, 'Portée', 504-506, argued for 870, but he based this conclusion on the suspect dating of Pseudo-Symeon.

<sup>7</sup> This is the assumption of Byzantinists such as Vogt, *Basile*, 61, and Ostrogorsky, *State*, 233. However W. Fischer, 'Zu "Leo und Alexander als Mitkaiser von Byzanz"', *BZ*, 5 (1896), 137-139, esp. 138, raised the possibility that all three sons Constantine, Leo and Alexander were co-emperors together with their father, prompted by a papal letter of summer 879 that only refers to Constantine and Alexander as co-emperors. Further D. M. Metcalf, 'Basil, Constantine, and Alexander. An Enigmatic Byzantine Follis of the Ninth Century', *Situla: Razprave Narodnega Muzeja Ljubljani*, 14-15 (1974), 269-274, notes the existence of a coin where Basil is indicated as having Alexander as co-emperor with Constantine, and thus muses that Alexander was

the *Eisagoge*<sup>8</sup>, and he and Leo are depicted and described as *despotes* in the illustrated manuscript of the homilies of Gregory of Nazianzus, which dates to the early 880s.<sup>9</sup> He also appears with his father and Leo on coins.<sup>10</sup> When Basil died in 886 Leo and Alexander were left as co-emperors<sup>11</sup>, but during the period 886-912 it is evident that the brothers were not equal partners in power; the elder Leo governed the empire whilst Alexander was an ineffective (albeit imperial) figure.<sup>12</sup> It has been wondered whether this situation was normal for Byzantium, or if Leo had denied Alexander his right to share in the running of the empire. Both Vogt and Karlin-Hayter indicate that Leo blocked Alexander on purpose. Vogt appealed to the evidence of Basil's *First Parainesis*; he found it odd that this text was addressed only to Leo as heir, and concluded that Leo had written the *Parainesis* himself to claim sole imperial authority.<sup>13</sup> Karlin-Hayter simply attributes the situation to the fact that Leo was 'extremely autocratic'.<sup>14</sup> The chroniclers themselves relate that Leo kept his brother well away from the tasks of an emperor because he was suspicious of him<sup>15</sup>, and there is certainly evidence of a history of tension between the brothers. Yet it is safe to assume that Alexander would not have had governmental responsibilities even if the brothers had not had personal difficulties. It surely would have been the fate of any younger co-emperor to remain very much in the background.<sup>16</sup> Basil certainly devoted most of his attention to preparing Constantine for power, and if Constantine had succeeded Leo would probably have remained as shadowy a figure as Alexander under Leo. Further, although Basil I made his sons co-emperors his own authority as emperor was never diluted. Vogt's theory concerning the *First Parainesis* is insubstantial, and in fact it confirms that although two co-emperors were to succeed Basil only the eldest partner was to be ruler of the empire. That Leo was rightfully senior emperor is reflected in the *Life*

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crowned before the death of Constantine, perhaps in a period when Leo was in disgrace. Both the letter and the coin are however problematic; it seems best to observe simply that Alexander is definitely known to have been co-emperor with Basil and Leo after Constantine's death.

<sup>8</sup> See Schminck, *Rechtsbüchern*, 4. 4.

<sup>9</sup> See Kalavrezou-Maxeiner, 'Portraits', 21.

<sup>10</sup> See Grierson, *Byzantine Coins*, 175.

<sup>11</sup> *GMC*, 848; *VE*, 5. 19-20; *VT*, 14. 4-10.

<sup>12</sup> Runciman, *Romanus Lecapenus*, 17.

<sup>13</sup> Vogt, 'Jeunesse', 408-410.

<sup>14</sup> Karlin-Hayter, 'Bad Name', 586.

<sup>15</sup> *GMC*, 872.

<sup>16</sup> Certainly the later case of the rule of the brothers Basil II and Constantine VIII is comparable to that of Leo VI and Alexander I.

of *Theophano* which asserts that although Leo and Alexander were emperors Leo was to be the superior partner.<sup>17</sup> The comment of Tabari that only one of the three sons of Basil had taken the throne on their father's death also seems pertinent.<sup>18</sup> Although a junior colleague Alexander's imperial status was never denied him by Leo.<sup>19</sup> Throughout the period 886-912 Alexander is acknowledged in a stream of sources as being emperor with his brother; their partnership appears in various saints's *Lives*<sup>20</sup>, the *Synaxarion*<sup>21</sup>, Choirosphaktes's poem on the death of Stephen<sup>22</sup>, the *Russian Primary Chronicle*<sup>23</sup> (and the treaties between Byzantium and Russia drawn up in 907 and 911 that are indicated in the *Russian Primary Chronicle*<sup>24</sup>), legal documents such as that relating to the selling of a piece of land in 897<sup>25</sup>, inscriptions<sup>26</sup>, coins<sup>27</sup> and the *Kletorologion* of Philotheos.<sup>28</sup> His name can even be restored to the acrostic device in Leo's *Taktika*.<sup>29</sup> Of these sources Philotheos's *Kletorologion* deserves special attention, for its testimony is

<sup>17</sup> *VT*, 14, 4-10.

<sup>18</sup> *Tabari*, vol. 37, 154.

<sup>19</sup> S. P. Lambros, 'Leo und Alexander als Mitkaiser von Byzanz', *BZ*, 4 (1895), 92-98, conjectured that Leo did remove Alexander from his imperial position after 904, but this view was denied by G. Ostrogorsky, 'Zum Reisebericht des Harun-ibn-Jahja', *SK*, 5 (1932), 251-257, esp. 253, n. 10.

<sup>20</sup> *VE*, 5, 19-20; *VT*, 14, 4-10; E. Kurtz, 'Des Klerikers Gregorios Bericht über Leben, Wunderthaten und Translation der Hl. Theodora von Thessalonich nebst der Metaphrase des Johannes Staurakios', *Mémoires de l'Académie Impériale des Sciences de St.-Petersbourg*, eighth series, *Classe Historico-Philologique*, VI/1 (1904), 1-112, esp. 26, 26-30; *Life of Maria the Younger*, *AASS*, Nov IV, 688-705, esp. 693-694; *Life of Basil the Younger*, *PG* 109, 656.

<sup>21</sup> *AASS*, Propylaeum Novembris, 878, 14-16.

<sup>22</sup> Kolias, *Choerosphactès*, Appendice, 2, 13.

<sup>23</sup> *Russian Primary Chronicle*, 62.

<sup>24</sup> *Russian Primary Chronicle*, 65-66.

<sup>25</sup> See *Actes de Laura*, I, 85-91.

<sup>26</sup> See Speiser, 'Les inscriptions de Thessalonique', 162-163; Grégoire, 'Blaise', 400-401.

<sup>27</sup> Grierson, *Byzantine Coins*, 175, but note his comment that 'Alexander plays a minor part on the coinage of Leo'.

<sup>28</sup> Oikonomidès, *Listes*, 81-235.

<sup>29</sup> See Grosdidier de Matons, 'Trois études', 229-242. Alexander's name was obscured from the text in the general *damnatio memoriae* that he was subjected to after his death in 913; see Grosdidier de Matons, 'Trois études', 241-242; C. A. Bourdara, 'Quelques cas de *damnatio memoriae* à l'époque de la dynastie macédonienne', *JOB*, 32/2 (1982), 337-346, esp. 338. Ševčenko, 'Poems', 209-210, noted evidence of another text that provided a favourable mention of Alexander which was tampered with after his death. The portrait of Alexander that survives in the north gallery of Hagia Sophia probably dates from his reign: see P. A. Underwood and E. J. W. Hawkins, 'The Mosaics of Hagia Sophia at Istanbul. The Portrait of the Emperor Alexander. A Report on Work Done by the Byzantine Institute in 1959 and 1960', *DOP*, 15 (1961), 187-217.

contemporary with the reign of Alexander and Leo. The two brothers are presented as co-emperors<sup>30</sup>, but Philotheos also makes clear the realities of power. Any change made in ceremonies, offices or the order of precedence are all ascribed to Leo alone.<sup>31</sup> There are almost twice as many references to the 'emperor' than to the 'emperors'. It is noted that the 'Christ-loving despot' Leo distributes twenty pounds of gold on his brumalia, and that Alexander the 'fortunate augustus' distributes only ten pounds of gold.<sup>32</sup> There is even a distinction drawn between the autokrator and the 'little' emperor, who takes second place.<sup>33</sup> All these factors re-enforce the notion that one of the co-emperors was naturally dominant; it was Leo who took all the decisions, it was Leo who governed the empire.

It is natural to wonder what Alexander did in his capacity as co-emperor. Runciman suggested that 'co-emperors probably had little work to do except on ceremonial occasions, accompanying the Senior Emperor or deputizing for him'.<sup>34</sup> This appears to be borne out by what is known of Alexander's activities during his brother's reign. Alexander's participation in ceremonies, such as the brumalia, is reflected by Philotheos; in 886 Alexander participated in the ceremonial reburial of Michael III<sup>35</sup>; sometime between 901 and 912 Alexander and Leo are reputed to have borne the relics of Mary Magdalene on their shoulders and to have deposited them in a silver-covered casket in the left-hand side of the sanctuary of the church of St Lazaros<sup>36</sup>; in 903 Alexander took part in the ceremonial procession on the feast of Mid-Pentecost to the church of St Mokios<sup>37</sup>; in 906 Alexander attended the baptism of his nephew Constantine, acting as one of his sponsors<sup>38</sup>; in 907 Alexander had a part to play in the reception of Russian envoys to Constantinople, taking the oath with Leo regarding the treaty and tribute agreed between the two peoples.<sup>39</sup> As regards Alexander deputizing for Leo it seems likely that during the tetragamy crisis when Leo was excommunicated his

<sup>30</sup> For example Oikonomidès, *Listes*, 83. 31, 221. 21, 223. 18.

<sup>31</sup> Oikonomidès, *Listes*, 101. 1-2, 103. 25-26, 147. 15-17, 187. 17-24, 217. 33-34.

<sup>32</sup> Oikonomidès, *Listes*, 223. 26—225. 1. The empress Zoc Zaoutzaina distributed even less than her brother-in-law, only eight pounds of gold.

<sup>33</sup> Oikonomidès, *Listes*, 99. 12.

<sup>34</sup> Runciman, *Romanus Lecapenus*, 17.

<sup>35</sup> *GMC*, 849.

<sup>36</sup> See Jenkins, Laourdas and Mango, 'Nine Orations', 10. The fourteenth-century source is Nikephoros Kallistos, *Sermon on St Mary Magdalene*, PG 147, 539-576, csp. 573.

<sup>37</sup> *GMC*, 861; *VE*, 67. 23-25.

<sup>38</sup> *GMC*, 865.

<sup>39</sup> *Russian Primary Chronicle*, 65.

co-emperor would have attained a higher profile in ceremony. It has also been conjectured that when Leo began to ail in 912 Alexander again had a more significant role on state occasions; Alexander has been identified as the figure wearing one black boot and one red boot seen by Harun-ibn-Yahya participating in the Ash Wednesday ceremony in Constantinople.<sup>40</sup> What kept Alexander occupied for the rest of his time is starkly outlined by the Byzantines; after his accession he continued with his education<sup>41</sup>, devoted himself to leisure pursuits such as 'delicate living' and hunting<sup>42</sup>, and plotted against his brother. This last facet of his activities can be studied in more depth.

The relationship between Leo and Alexander seems to have been notoriously tense.<sup>43</sup> The *Life of Euthymios* observes that Basil I left Leo and Alexander as co-emperors despite the fact that the younger was 'unbrotherly disposed' towards the elder<sup>44</sup>, whilst the chronicles allege that Leo was suspicious of his brother. Indeed there are instances during Leo's reign when Alexander was believed to have been scheming against his brother. At some point in late 899 or early 900, between the death of Zoe Zaoutzaina and Leo's marriage to Eudokia Baiane, Leo suspected Alexander of plotting to take the throne, and as punishment he separated him from his wife<sup>45</sup>; and when Leo was attacked in the church of St Mokios on 11 May 903 Alexander came under suspicion of having been behind the assassination attempt.<sup>46</sup> A fragmentary source (perhaps surviving episodes from a *Life of Niketas David*) even asserts that towards the end of his life Leo wished to do away with Alexander so as to secure the rule of his son Constantine VII.<sup>47</sup> The question thus arises, what lies behind such outward expressions of distrust and hate? The *Life of Euthymios* indicates that the unbrotherly sentiment pre-dated the accession of 886, and was felt mainly by Alexander, so a reason must be sought to account for the fact that Alexander bore a grudge against Leo prior to Basil's death. For Jenkins the explanation for the hatred was to be found in 'dynas-

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<sup>40</sup> See R. J. H. Jenkins, 'The Emperor Alexander and the Saracen Prisoners', *SBN*, 7 (1953), 389-393, esp. 393, repr. *Studies on*, XV. However Karlin-Hayter, *VE*, *Commentary*, 157, has indicated that she disagrees with Jenkins's identification of the figure as Alexander. For Harun's visit to Byzantium see Vasiliev, 'Harun-Ibn-Yahya'; Ostrogorsky, 'Zum Reisebericht'; Grégoire, 'Captif arabe'.

<sup>41</sup> *VT*, 14. 16.

<sup>42</sup> *GMC*, 872.

<sup>43</sup> See Tougher, 'Bad Relations', the argument from which is reproduced here.

<sup>44</sup> *VE*, 5. 20-21, 67. 24-35.

<sup>45</sup> *VE*, 55. 21-24.

<sup>46</sup> *GMC*, 861.

<sup>47</sup> See Flusin, 'Fragment', I and II.

tic reasons', though he fails to elaborate what he means by this.<sup>48</sup> However since he credited Basil with the same emotion for Leo for the same reasons it is to be presumed that he has in mind the issue of the uncertain parentage of Leo; Basil and Alexander detested Leo because he was the son of the Amorian Michael III. The chronicles do stress that Alexander was a 'genuine' son of Basil<sup>49</sup>, and he was conceived at a time when Michael III could not possibly have been his father. It could be that such a consideration did affect Alexander's attitude towards Leo, no matter what the truth about his brother's parentage. However there was a more concrete reason than this as to why Alexander should feel cheated of imperial power; Alexander was not concerned about any theoretical question of birthright but the realities of imperial power, for during the period 883-886 it is likely that he had been the heir-apparent to Basil I. When Leo was accused of intent to kill his father in 883 and was punished by loss of imperial status and imprisonment it is natural that Basil would have turned his attentions towards the next in line, just as he had turned to Leo on the death of Constantine in 879; the next in line in 883 was Alexander. This scenario has already been envisaged by Vogt<sup>50</sup>, though it appears not to have been adopted by other Byzantinists despite its unerring logic, both in political practicalities and the subsequent feelings of Alexander for Leo. Perhaps the reason that Vogt's theory did not catch on was that he had no evidence, it was just a conjecture. That no Byzantine testimony on this state of affairs exists is not that surprising, given that Alexander found himself shoved back into the shadows again when Leo was liberated and restored to the position of heir-apparent in 886. An echo of this situation is however found in an Arab source. Masudi relates that after the death of Basil I Alexander had taken the throne, but the people of Byzantium had become discontent and replaced him with his brother Leo.<sup>51</sup> Thus it is extremely likely that on Leo's removal from power in 883 Basil had turned to Alexander as his heir. It is possible that a marriage for Alexander was arranged at this time, just as Leo had been married to Theophano after the death of Constantine. Alexander would certainly have been of a marriageable age in the period 883-886, and he did acquire a wife at some point.<sup>52</sup> With the restoration of Leo in July 883 the elder brother resumed his position as heir to the throne, which he mounted

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<sup>48</sup> Jenkins, *Imperial Centuries*, 199.

<sup>49</sup> *GMC*, 841.

<sup>50</sup> See Vogt, *Basile*, 61, 156, and 'Jeunesse', 418, 421.

<sup>51</sup> Masudi, in Vasiliev, *Byzance et les Arabes*, II, 2, 38-39.

<sup>52</sup> As testified by *VE*, 55. 22-23, 127. 33—129. 4.

the following month. In this context Alexander's malice towards his brother can be well understood. Whether he was actually moved to plot against his brother as alleged is another matter.

There were two specific instances when Alexander was believed to have been behind attempts to remove Leo from power, in 899-900 and 903. The first case is only recorded by the *Life of Euthymios*. It states that at some point after the death of Zoe Zaoutzaina (late 899—early 900) and before Lent 900 Euthymios heard that Alexander had been deprived of his wife as a punishment for having been suspected by Leo of plotting to overthrow him. Euthymios urged the emperor to rescind this measure, but Leo was immovable. On the face of it there seems no reason to question the motives for the action against Alexander, especially when the timing of the incident is considered. With the death of Zoe Zaoutzaina Leo had had his acceptable quota of two wives, from whom no male children had been secured. Ostensibly then Leo had had all the chances he was allowed to produce a male heir of his own blood; the task of producing the future ruler of the Macedonian dynasty should now fall to others, namely Alexander and his wife. Alexander would have realised the implications of the dynastic situation, and thus his attempt to secure his position by forcibly ousting his brother. However there is a more persuasive reason as to why Alexander and his wife were split up; Leo himself was set on securing the throne for a son of his rather than of his brother. It is clear that Leo intended to take another wife, and his excuse for doing so was to be that there had to be an augusta in the palace. To this end he had to get rid of those females who already had the possibility of filling this position. Hence Alexander's wife was ousted, and Leo's daughter Anna was to be married off to a westerner, leaving the path to a third wife clear. That Alexander was plotting against his brother in 900 can be doubted then. The second suspected plot was in 903, when Leo was nearly assassinated in the church of St Mokios on the feast of Mid-Pentecost. This incident has been recorded by both the chronicles and the *Life of Euthymios*, who concur on the basic elements of the story. On the feast of Mid-Pentecost it was the custom to process to the church of St Mokios, and in 903 Leo entered the nave of the church. However on this occasion something very irregular occurred; someone sprang down from the pulpit and swung a staff at Leo's head. The sources are adamant that if the blow had not been impeded by a hanging candelabra Leo would have been killed. Before the assailant could strike again he was apprehended by one of the emperor's bodyguards, Chandaris. The sources disagree over the identity of the instigator of this attempt to kill Leo. For the *Life of Euthymios* the major suspect was

the patriarch Nikolaos, whom it also connects to a plot with Andronikos Doukas.<sup>53</sup> This testimony is highly suspect however as this source would do anything to blacken the name of Euthymios's rival; in fact it may reflect the propaganda that Leo himself circulated against Nikolaos in 907. The detail that Nikolaos ran away from the church after the attempted murder is not sinister but quite natural, and is hardly the act of someone who knew what was going to befall the emperor. The candidate that the chronicles identify, Alexander, is much more believable, and the evidence of the *Life of Euthymios* even adds to this impression. The chronicles report that at the last minute before entering the church of St Mokios with Leo Alexander pleaded illness. Instead of accompanying his brother into the nave it seems he mounted to the upper galleries of the church, the *katechoumena*, for the *Life of Euthymios* informs us that after the attack on Leo Alexander did not run away, but leapt down from the *katechoumena* to attend to his brother, an uncharacteristic action. No doubt it was this combination of odd behaviour that made Alexander seem suspect. Alexander could certainly have been keen to see the end of Leo, for by 903 Leo had lost his third wife but was still pursuing his goal of producing a son for he had taken a concubine, Zoe Karbonopsina. Alexander may have wished to curtail his brother's ambitions once and for all so as to secure power for himself and his family, though he had not yet managed to produce any children of his own. However although Alexander makes more sense as the mastermind of the assassination attempt of 903 than Nikolaos this does not mean that he was behind it, and indeed there are good reasons to believe that in reality Alexander had nothing to do with the events in the church of St Mokios. Although the would-be assassin (who is given a name only by the *Life of Euthymios*, that of Stylianos) was apprehended and tortured he revealed no details of any accomplices. It is odd that this supposed tool of Alexander would have taken the trouble to protect the co-emperor, and it is natural then to conclude that he worked alone. Further the choice of weapon is odd; surely Alexander could have furnished his agent with something more traditional for an assassination, such as a sword or a dagger.<sup>54</sup> It can be concluded then that the attack on Leo in 903 was the act of an individual with some grievance against the emperor, a grievance which is now unknown.<sup>55</sup> Alexander's illness

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<sup>53</sup> *VE*, 73, 24—75, 7.

<sup>54</sup> Macrides, 'Killing', 520, notes that 'a stick or a staff' was the weapon commonly used in cases where killings arose out of quarrels.

was just a coincidence, and his supposed concern for his wounded brother was probably an expression of self-interest; he needed to know whether his brother was likely to live or die, whether his time for power had come.

Thus in the two instances where Alexander was believed to have been plotting against Leo it seems that he was unjustly accused, either deliberately or accidentally. What these episodes reveal is not the truth or falsehood of Alexander's guilt but the fact that he was believed capable of plotting against his brother, that it was a plausible scenario. There was an acknowledged tension between the brothers which sprang from a specific rivalry over imperial power, but also from a distrust that was endemic to the middle Byzantine period. Herlong observed that in the period 717-959 'It is notable that many coups d'état and almost all the successful ones were carried out by relatives of the deposed monarch', and that consequently 'The ruler's suspicion of his close relatives is characteristic of the eighth through tenth centuries, when the emperor delegated power only to ministers whom he could replace at will'.<sup>56</sup> This statement is borne out by what is known of Basil I's attitude to his relatives. In the *First Parainesis* Leo is warned against relatives, and is told to trust friends rather than family.<sup>57</sup> Basil put this wariness into practice. All his daughters (Anastasia, Anna, Helena and Maria) were made nuns and placed in the monastery of St Euphemia of Petriion.<sup>58</sup> Basil's biographer alleges that the motive for this action was piety, but the emperor can be suspected of seeking to avoid having a plethora of sons-in-law, who could have nursed imperial ambitions.<sup>59</sup> The one male in-law of Basil that is heard of is Christopher, who won a key victory over the Paulicians in 872 when he was domestic of the schools. Christopher is identified as the *gambros* of Basil, meaning that he was either a brother-in-law or son-in-law of the emperor. Given that Basil's

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<sup>55</sup> If the *Life of Euthymios's* information that the name of the assassin was Stylianos has any truth perhaps the act was that of a surviving member of the family of Stylianos Zaoutzes, though it would then seem odd that this was not obvious at the time.

<sup>56</sup> Herlong, *Social Mobility*, 24.

<sup>57</sup> *PG* 107, xxviii.

<sup>58</sup> *VB*, 264. For the daughters see Herlong, *Social Mobility*, 78; Vogt, 'Jeunesse', 400, and *Basile*, 59.

<sup>59</sup> Herlong, *Social Mobility*, 23, notes that Constantine VI tonsured his daughters when he divorced their mother, his first wife, so as 'to remove them from the succession'. Vogt, *Basile*, 59, did wonder if the daughters of Basil were children of his first marriage. However Basil was happy enough to depict them in the mosaic of the imperial family in the Kainourgion.

daughters became nuns<sup>60</sup> it is likely that Christopher was a brother-in-law.<sup>61</sup> However apart from his victory at Tephrike nothing more is known of Christopher. Regarding Basil's own blood relatives they too remain vague figures, suggesting that Basil kept them at a distance. His three brothers (Marianos, Bardas and Symbatios) and his cousin Asylaion played a significant part in eliminating Bardas and Michael III, but do not appear to have reaped the rewards of imperial power.<sup>62</sup> Basil was keen simply to pass on the throne to his eldest son, and had no desire to spread power too widely and too thinly within the wider family; the lesson of the Amorian dynasty was no doubt clear to him. His closest allies appear to have been friends rather than relatives, figures such as Baanes, Theodore Santabarenos, Photios and Stylianos Zaoutzes. It is natural to enquire if Leo's behaviour during his reign also fitted into this pattern. Certainly his sisters did not make any stunning come back whilst he was on the throne; Anna's name surfaces in connection with the miraculous Constantine the Jew<sup>63</sup>, and an inscription on a wall near Petriion dating to the period 905-912 states 'God help Leo *despotes*, Alexander, Constantine [VII], Anna, Helena and Maria, the porphyrogennetoi'.<sup>64</sup> Notably when Leo argued that the reason for marrying a third time was the necessity of having an augusta in the palace his sisters do not seem to have been considered as possible candidates for the position. As for those whom Leo appointed as his key officials the impression is that they were valued friends rather than relatives, men such as Andrew, the Phokades, the Doukai, Stylianos Zaoutzes, Samonas, Nikolaos, Leo Choirosphaktes, Himerios, Euthymios and Constantine the eunuch. However in Leo's case the differentiation between relative and friend was sometimes rather more blurred than in Basil's. Stylianos

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<sup>60</sup> Further they may have been born only from 864 on if they were truly children of Basil and Eudokia Ingerine.

<sup>61</sup> It is commonly assumed that this was by virtue of Christopher marrying a sister of Basil, but an alternative is that he was related to Basil through Eudokia Ingerine.

<sup>62</sup> See Herlong, *Social Mobility*, 74-78; Vogt, 'Jeunesse', 399.

<sup>63</sup> *AASS*, Nov IV, 648-649. The basilissa Anna sent a sealed letter to the fathers on Mt Olympos requesting their advice on some matter, but she made the condition that the letter was only to be given to the father who knew the contents of the letter before he opened it; Constantine the Jew alone fitted the bill. For comment on this episode see Grégoire, 'Acta Sanctorum', 804; Vogt, 'Jeunesse', 400.

<sup>64</sup> See A. M. Schneider, 'Mauern und Tore am Goldenen Horn zu Konstantinopel', *Nachrichten der Akademie der Wissenschaft in Göttingen, Philologisch-Historische Klasse*, 5 (1950), 65-107, esp. 98-99. Ohnsorge, 'Töchter', identified the Maria of the inscription as a sister of Leo, but argued that the Anna and Helena were the emperor's daughters by Zoe Karbonopsina. It is surely safer and more natural to identify all the women in the inscription as the sisters of the emperor.

Zaoutzes became Leo's father-in-law, and his relationship with the emperor had some basis in Leo's association with his daughter. Nikolaos was Leo's spiritual brother, and Euthymios his spiritual father. Leo Choirosphaktes was related to the imperial family on two counts; his wife had close connections with the Macedonians, and he was related to Leo's fourth wife Zoe Karbonopsina.<sup>65</sup> Himerios also had a connection with the emperor's fourth wife, being married to her sister.<sup>66</sup> It is possible that the Rhabdouchoi had family ties with the Macedonians, for probably one of their number was the *exadelphos* (cousin) of Leo who was sufficiently important to attend an assembly where the emperor put forward the arrangements for the succession.<sup>67</sup> Leo's own brother Stephen was even appointed patriarch. However the men who rose to prominence under Leo never did so simply because they were related to the emperor; they were valued on other merits, and the principal of appointing friends to office rather than relations holds good for the reign of Leo VI. The situation of Leo's sisters did not change. The presence of the Rhabdouchoi is detectable but the lack of knowledge about their careers indicates that they were not invested with great authority. Stephen did become patriarch, but this was an asset for Leo, not a threat. Thus Leo's wariness of Alexander also makes sense as a normal feature of middle Byzantine history. As with Basil Leo's prime concern was for a son and heir; blood relatives could threaten the child's future role as

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<sup>65</sup> For Choirosphaktes's connections with the imperial family see Herlong, *Social Mobility*, 83, 106-107; Kolias, *Choerosphactès*, 17-18, and letter 23, 115. 29-31; *Tabari*, vol. 38, 181, where it is indicated that Choirosphaktes was the uncle of Constantine VII.

<sup>66</sup> Flusin, 'Fragment', I, 128-129. For Himerios's influence with Leo see *DAI*, I, 240. 173-242. 196.

<sup>67</sup> Flusin, 'Fragment', I, 128-129, II, 235-236. The study of this fragmentary text, possibly a *Life of Niketas David*, led Flusin, 'Fragment', II, 236, to conclude that there was 'autour de l'empereur Léon, un réseau apparentement assez dense de grands personnages qui sont liés à la famille impériale par la naissance ou par alliance'. The Rhabdouchos in question could possibly be either John, who was the saviour of Arethas at his trial in 900, or Leo who may have been the *strategos* of Dyrrachion in 880 and was certainly in the post c. 917: see Flusin, 'Fragment', II, 236; Jenkins and Laourdas, 'Eight Letters', 349-350, 368; *DAI*, II, 135; G. Ostrogorsky, 'Leo Rhabdouchos and Leo Choirosphaktes' (in Russian with a French summary), *ЗРVI*, 3 (1955), 29-36; M. Lascaris, 'La rivalité bulgare-byzantine en Serbie et la mission de Léon Rhabdouchos', *Revue Historique du Sud-Est Européen*, 20 (1943), 202-207. From a letter of Leo Choirosphaktes (see Kolias, *Choerosphactès*, letter 27, 129. 12-13) it is known that Leo Rhabdouchos was the brother-in-law of Leo Choirosphaktes, and if this was by virtue of Choirosphaktes marrying Rhabdouchos's sister (as hypothesised by Herlong, *Social Mobility*, 274 n. 222) this indicates that she was a cousin of the emperor. If this was the case they could be the children of Christopher, if he did indeed marry a sister of Basil I.

emperor, so friends were favoured. Such a premise is graphically demonstrated by one source which alleges that towards the end of his life Leo was anxious to secure the succession of his son and at first laid down that Alexander could remain as co-emperor until Leo's own death yet lose his position on Constantine's accession, but later as death was approaching Leo proposed that Alexander should be done away with and that Himerios should become the legal guardian (*epitropos*) of Constantine VII.<sup>68</sup>

Given the general wariness that the emperor had of relatives in the middle Byzantine period Alexander's continuing role as co-emperor, and indeed as ultimate successor with Constantine on the death of Leo, seems puzzling. Why did Leo allow Alexander to remain as co-emperor throughout the reign, and why did he pass on power to the combination of a brother and a son? In addressing the first of these questions it must be remembered that it was Basil who had established that Leo and Alexander should succeed him as co-emperors; presumably he had good reasons for this arrangement. The biographer of Basil indicated that the reason why Basil shared the imperial title with his sons Constantine and Leo from an early point in his reign was to secure the throne for the Macedonian dynasty; he wanted to enforce the notion that he and his family were here to stay. This idea was still with Basil when Constantine died, for Alexander was then brought into the college of emperors. Certainly one son was destined to be the real ruling force after the death of Basil, but the presence of the other was important also, for this stressed the concept of dynastic dominion. This system was thus maintained under Leo,

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<sup>68</sup> See Flusin, 'Fragment', I, 128-129, II, 237-239. The fragmentary source containing this information is presumed to be a *Life of Niketas David*. Its hostility towards Leo is not surprising for its hero Niketas David was one of the uncompromising opponents of the fourth marriage. Given that it goes out of its way to paint Leo in the darkest of hues (vitriol that is matched in no other source on this emperor) a question mark hangs over its testimony concerning Leo's plans for Alexander. Nowhere else are such plans referred to, and in addition the plans it describes did not come to fruition. Alexander did succeed in 912, Himerios did not become *epitropos*. One of the reasons (the other is death, presumably Leo's) that it gives for the failure of Leo's second proposal rings untrue; it declares that the senate deterred the emperor, which Flusin read as a sign that the senate was not hostile to Alexander. This conclusion should certainly be questioned; it is more likely that it was the extreme act of fratricide that led to the opposition to the plan, if it existed. Indeed it is hard to believe that Leo did suggest the execution of his brother. This was not the emperor's style; he was not given to acts of assassination. On the other hand it would be unwise to dismiss these fragments completely; indeed Dagron, 'Pourpre', 116, describes the text as having 'une étonnante vérité'. The author does seem well informed on many points, such as the details of Niketas's life, the relations of Himerios with Leo and the existence of a cousin of the emperor.

but the situation did take on a different aspect for Alexander was Leo's brother. As such he could pose a danger to Leo that he had not posed to Basil. Basil's own coolness towards his brothers should be remembered. Leo's prime objective was that a son of his own flesh should succeed him, and if Alexander presented a threat to this he could expect to suffer, as he did in 899-900 when he was deprived of his wife. Leo would stop at nothing until he had a son and heir; Alexander was never to become heir or to provide one either. With the birth of Constantine in 905 Leo could at last feel some relief, for he himself was still a relatively young man of thirty-nine and could reasonably expect to live until his son was old enough to be emperor in his own right. However by early 912 Leo had become seriously ill and death was encroaching upon him. It is now that the second question surfaces, why did Leo decide to leave the minor Constantine (who was six in the autumn of 911) in the hands of uncle Alexander? Himerios was not on hand at this crucial time, since he was either still on campaign against Crete or was recovering elsewhere after defeat. Himerios only returned to Constantinople after Leo's death when Alexander had already attained power; he was seized and confined to a palace monastery where he died six months later.<sup>69</sup> Alexander's treatment of Himerios can be explained by the fact that they were opponents whilst Leo was alive<sup>70</sup>, though the story acquires an extra dimension if it is believed that Leo had intended to promote Himerios at Alexander's expense. If Leo had any thoughts about entrusting power to his fourth wife Zoe Karbonopsina no record of them has survived; she was perhaps still too controversial a figure.<sup>71</sup> Likewise there is no evidence that Leo planned to appoint any other friend as Constantine's guardian. Ultimately Leo chose Alexander. He was after all a member of the Macedonian dynasty; to have gifted another with imperial authority might have put the efforts of Basil and Leo to secure power for the immediate family at risk. Further by 912 Alexander had no children of his own so Leo could have felt that there was a good chance that Constantine would eventually come to power. Leo naturally had his fears for the future of his son too, and constantly appealed to his brother to look to the welfare of his

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<sup>69</sup> *GMC*, 873.

<sup>70</sup> See Karlin-Hayter, 'Bad Name', 592.

<sup>71</sup> The church had not yet recognised her as *augusta*, despite the efforts of the allies of the emperor to persuade the patriarch Euthymios to do so: see *VE*, 109. 24—113. 27. Ironically it was Nikolaos, who became patriarch again in 912, who finally did the honours for Zoe: see *VE*, 137. 11-13.

nephew.<sup>72</sup> Leo no doubt hoped that the strength of feeling within Byzantium would be enough to keep Alexander from doing anything untoward to Constantine. Leo knew that he was taking a risk in leaving Alexander to succeed him in May 912, but there was no better alternative available in the circumstances.

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<sup>72</sup> *GMC*, 871. Leo also wrote a poem to Alexander about Constantine VII, in which he probably urged his brother to take care of the child: see Maas, 'Literarisches'. Surviving poems on the death of Leo VI, probably written soon after the event, record that he exhorted Alexander to consider Constantine as his own son, and Constantine to view Alexander as his father: see Ševčenko, 'Poems', esp. 196-197. For what it is worth Skylitzes, *Scylitzae*, 192. 17-18, records that Leo called upon the senate to keep his wife and son safe.

## CONCLUSION

The death of Leo VI in 912 was undoubtedly premature. Born in the early autumn of 866, he was only 45 years old when he succumbed to dysentery. His untimely passing led to severe convulsions within Byzantine society and the empire, instigated by his brother Alexander coming to power and seeking to set his own stamp upon Byzantium. The ex-patriarch Nikolaos found himself recalled from exile and restored to the patriarchal throne, and then set about revenging himself on those who had ousted him and his clergy. Zoe found herself removed from the palace, her son under the control of his uncle. Himerios, Leo's close advisor, was removed from his office and confined to a monastery where he soon died. The Bulgarian ambassadors who had come to meet the new emperor and verify the existing treaty between the two powers were rebuked, instigating a severe war that was to last into the next decade. If Leo had lived the history of early tenth-century Byzantium might have presented a rather different, more stable, picture. Alexander would have remained safely in the background. Leo and Zoe would have maintained their rule, enforcing acceptance of their marriage. Nikolaos would have been kept at arm's length, unable to rock the church. The elderly but firm Euthymios would have retained respect in the office of patriarch, and when the old man died Leo would have appointed a more amenable character in his place (Arethas would have made a distinguished candidate), someone who would finally have recognised Zoe as augusta in church. Surrounding the emperor and serving him would have been a characteristically friendly group of officials. The eunuch Constantine the Paphlagonian had already stepped into Samonas's shoes. Himerios would have maintained his eminent position. Leo Choirosphaktes may have returned from his exile, and once again placed his skills at the disposal of the emperor. As for Leo's generals, the descendants of those whom he had previously depended upon had already begun to come to prominence and would have risen still further; the names of Phokas and Doukas and Argyros would still have circulated with honour at the imperial court. As for a certain Romanos Lekapenos, his career may have followed a more modest path. The securing and consolidating of the eastern frontier would have continued apace, whilst in the west, southern Italy would have been freed of a Moslem presence. Best of all the lengthy and grievous war with Bulgaria might never have arisen. As for Constantine VII, it

can be imagined that he would have ascended to the throne more smoothly and directly than he did.

Such speculation on how Leo's reign might have progressed if he had not died in 912 is of course hypothetical, but it is based on what this book has argued are the essential and true characteristics of Leo and his reign, not those that are perceived to be essential and true. For Leo is an emperor who has often received a tough press; for most Byzantinists he appears as a powerless, dominated and inactive figure, even dull. This book has aimed to reveal the emperor in a more realistic and authentic light, focusing its attention in particular on the politics of his reign. The most famous episode within this framework is the tetragamy crisis, which was itself initiated by Leo's determination to secure a son and heir of his own blood. Despite this obvious truth at the heart of the affair it appears that it has not been felt to have any relevance for other aspects of Leo's life and reign. However his tenacity of will is indeed in evidence in other episodes of the reign; to cite but a few Photios was deposed, Stephen was installed as patriarch though under-age, Theophano was honoured as a saint, and Eudokia Baiane was buried at Easter. An image of a forceful emperor thus emerges, an image that is at odds with characterisations of Leo as lax and dominated.

It is in the sphere of military affairs that Leo is most often cited as being an apathetic emperor. It is true that the period of his reign did witness significant military problems, but these should be considered with care before hasty judgements are reached concerning the emperor's ability to deal with them. Several factors need to be given due consideration. First Leo was a non-campaigning emperor, a feature of his reign that marked a break with the trend of previous centuries. Further the quality of the enemies that faced the empire was significant, most notably the canny Symeon whose rule witnessed a revival of conflict between Byzantium and Bulgaria. In addition the chronicle tradition is deeply biased against Leo; its account needs to be examined critically and balanced against evidence from other diverse sources. Leo in fact emerges as an emperor who was conscious of the military difficulties facing his empire and was conscientious in seeking ways to respond to them.

Characterisations of Leo as a weak and dominated emperor tend to be based on a consideration of domestic affairs during his reign, particularly with regard to his secular officials. It is held that Stylianos Zaoutzes was the ruling force during the first half of the reign, whilst in the second half another unethical favourite, Samonas, had undue influence over the emperor. However both these positions are inadequate and untenable. Stylianos may have risen to unprecedentedly

high office under Leo but he was never dominant, and was in fact for the most part loyal to the wishes of his imperial master. As for Samonas his prominence was part of Leo's wider attachment to and appreciation of his eunuch officials, and again both his rise was gradual and the extent of his influence has been over-estimated; he was in essence serving Leo's wishes. Further, although Stylianos and Samonas are prominent individuals, it is clear that the emperor extended his friendship to a much wider group of officials, including his generals who tend to be inaccurately portrayed as opponents of Leo's regime. Leo was an emperor who sought to place himself at the centre of a group of supportive 'senators'.

What transpires from a considered study of Leo and his reign does not tally with the popular perception of Leo as a weak, dominated and ineffective ruler. Rather he emerges as a strong-willed individual who carved out a very distinctive style of emperorship. He centred himself firmly in the imperial city of Constantinople, hardly ever venturing beyond its bounds. He established himself as a font and focus of authority, legislating and advising in all spheres from spirituality to war. Beneath him was a network of agents and officials to obey his will and put it into practice. Leo has surely been underestimated as the mere completer of the schemes of Basil and the scene-setter for the literary products of Constantine VII and his milieu. Leo may have had the task of securing the Macedonian dynasty but his persona seems to transcend this function. He lacked imperial heroes; he was not concerned with the veneration of the past, but the perfection of the present guided by himself, the wisest ruler of them all.



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## INDEX

The production of this index was undertaken at the same time as the proofing of the main text, and this double process has identified issues which deserve comment. First, there is no entry for Leo VI in the index; given the arrangement of the book such an item appeared rather superfluous. Second, where translations of the primary texts exist I have tended to quote them rather than provide my own translation; this will be most apparent with regard to my use of Patricia Karlin-Hayter's *Vita Euthymii Patriarchae CP. Text, Translation, Introduction and Commentary* (Brussels, 1970). Finally I would like to thank Anthony Kirby for his sharp-eyed and exacting proof-reading. All errors and idiosyncrasies, in interpretation as well as in presentation, remain my own.

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